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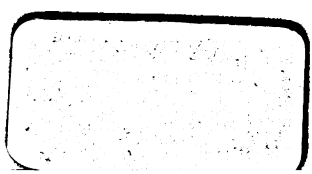

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# WASHINGTON:
# THE CAPITAL CITY

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## By Rufus Rockwell Wilson

### RAMBLES IN COLONIAL BYWAYS

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AN EARLY VIEW OF WASHINGTON

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# WASHINGTON
## THE CAPITAL CITY
## AND ITS PART IN THE HISTORY OF THE NATION

BY

*Rufus Rockwell Wilson*

AUTHOR OF "RAMBLES IN COLONIAL BYWAYS"

VOL. I.

*ILLUSTRATED*

PHILADELPHIA & LONDON
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
1901

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TO

MY MOTHER

IN WHOSE DEAR COMRADESHIP
THE GREATER PART OF
THIS BOOK WAS
WRITTEN

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# FOREWORD

THE writer who undertakes to tell the story of Washington confronts a task the like of which is presented by none of its sister cities. The federal capital during its hundred years of existence has been the political centre of the republic, the birthplace of parties and legislation, the training-ground and forum of one generation after another of public men. Indeed, from its founding until the present time it has been the brain and heart of the nation.

This fact has been kept constantly in mind in the writing of the present work, and, while sketching the rise of Washington from a wilderness hamlet to one of the most beautiful capitals in the world, the author has also attempted adequately to portray the political growth and development of the republic. Washington, Jackson, and Lincoln, Webster, Clay, and Calhoun, Seward, Chase, and Sumner are an inseparable and vital part of the history of the capital which they endeared to their coun-



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trymen, and have in the following pages the place that by right belongs to them. Liberal use, at the same time, has been made of anecdote, in the hopeful belief that our great men can be thus brought closer to a later generation than is possible in any other way.

No pains has been spared to assure accuracy of detail; though in a work intended primarily for popular reading it has not been thought necessary to quote authorities which are within the reach of every student. Years of preparation and many months of exacting labor have helped to the making of a book which it is hoped will awaken in its readers a new interest and a new pride in the history of their capital and common country. Should this hope be confirmed, the author will count his reward an ample one. His thanks are especially due to James F. Hood, Esq., of Washington, who kindly furnished from his collection the originals of five of the illustrations, and to Messrs. H. Virtue & Company, Limited, of London, for permission to reproduce several early views.

R. R. W.



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# WASHINGTON: THE FEDERAL CITY

## CHAPTER I

### A CAPITAL BUILT TO ORDER

WASHINGTON during its first century of existence has become one of the great capitals of the world. It has also grown to be the most beautiful city in our country. Among centres of authority and pleasure, only Paris equals it in beauty and charm, and Paris has behind it a thousand years of history. The reason for this lies partly in the fact that Washington is a city planned and built solely for the purposes of government. It is, perhaps, the only capital which has had such an origin; which is named after a nation's first leader, laid out according to his individual views, and beautified, in the main, according to his ideas of beauty. Indeed, Washington, as it stands to-day, may be said



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to express George Washington's intention and personal taste.

The selection of a site for a permanent capital was one of the tasks which fell to the First Congress. A settlement was reached only after a long and bitter contest, for sectional jealousies were strong and members of Congress from the New England States and from New York inclined to the belief that those from the South might gain undue advantage over them. Thus, the judgment of Congress often changed, and as its favor shifted from site to site—now the Susquehanna, then the falls of the Delaware, again the Potomac,—warmly favored by Washington, as his correspondence shows,—and later Germantown—the country was thrown into a turmoil of conflicting opinion and interests. A bill at one time passed both the House and Senate locating the capital at Germantown, now a suburb of Philadelphia, but delay ensuing, reconsideration was had, and Germantown lost its opportunity.

So stubborn grew the contest that it was feared that the union of States, as yet none too strongly welded, would be shattered ere a settlement was reached, and save for the political



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sagacity of Alexander Hamilton, these fears might have had confirmation. Hamilton, then Secretary of the Treasury, had proposed to Congress, as an essential feature of his plans for placing the federal finances on a solvent and enduring basis, the assumption by the general government of the debts contracted by the several States while prosecuting the War of Independence. Members from the Southern States, whose war debts were proportionately much smaller than those of the New England and other Northern States, influenced less by financial interests than by local pride, and fearful also of a too great central power, stoutly opposed the measure, while the Northern members almost to a man were resolved upon its adoption. Debated for weeks, it finally failed of passage in the House by a slender margin of two votes. The minority, however, refused to accept this decision, declining to transact any business whatsoever until it had been reversed, and day after day the House met only to adjourn. Again, as in the dispute over a site for the projected capital, there were whispered threats of secession and a dissolution of the Union.

Then it was that Hamilton, by using Thomas



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Jefferson, lately come from France to take the chief place in Washington's Cabinet, and still a stranger to partisan and sectional differences, as an instrument to put an end to both disputes, showed how consummate a politician he could be in support of his statesmanship. The Southern members, eagerly seconding Washington's fondly cherished desire, had asked that the seat of the federal government be established on the banks of the Potomac, and when Congress refused this request, their anger had rivalled that of the Northern men upon the question of the State debts. Might it not be, Hamilton asked Jefferson, at a chance meeting in front of the President's house in New York, that the Southern men would agree to vote for the assumption of the State debts if the Northern members promised to support a bill for a capital on the Potomac, and would not the Secretary of State exert his good offices to bring such a result about? The suggestion came as if upon the thought of the moment, but was so earnestly and eloquently urged by Hamilton that Jefferson declared that "although a stranger to the whole subject," he would be glad to lend what aid he could. Jefferson writes,—



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"I proposed to him to dine with me next day, and I would invite another friend or two, bring them into conference together, and I thought it impossible that reasonable men, consulting together coolly, could fail, by some mutual sacrifices of opinion, to form a compromise which was to save the Union. The discussion took place. . . . It was finally agreed"—so healing was the influence of good wine and good fellowship—"that whatever importance had been attached to the rejection of this proposition, the preservation of the Union and of concord among the States was more important; and that, therefore, it would be better that the vote of rejection should be rescinded, to effect which some members should change their votes. But it was observed that this pill would be peculiarly bitter to the Southern States, and that some concomitant measure should be adopted to sweeten it a little to them. There had been propositions to fix the seat of government either at Philadelphia or at Georgetown on the Potomac; and it was thought that by giving it to Philadelphia for ten years, and to Georgetown permanently afterwards, this might, as an anodyne, calm in some degree the ferment which



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might be excited by the other measure alone. So two of the Potomac members . . . agreed to change their votes, and Hamilton undertook to carry the other point."

Thus the assumption bill secured the sanction of Congress, and in the same manner an act was adopted, which received executive approval on July 16, 1790, giving the sole power to the President to select a federal territory "not exceeding ten miles square on the river Potomac at some space between the mouths of the Eastern Branch and the Conongocheague for the permanent seat of the government of the United States." A later act, at Washington's suggestion, changed these boundaries so as to include, besides the village of Georgetown in Maryland, a portion of Virginia with the town of Alexandria. Maryland and Virginia promptly ceded to the United States the territory required, but, in 1846, all that portion of the district lying on the west bank of the Potomac was retroceded by Congress to the State of Virginia, so that the federal territory now comprises sixty-four miles, bounded on three sides by the State of Maryland and on the fourth by the Potomac.

The site of the present city, covering the



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lower portion of the district, was selected by Washington in January, 1791, but had been seen and admired by him many years before. When a boy he saw it while riding the country on horseback, and he spoke of it when as a young man he camped with Braddock on the hill where now stands the Naval Observatory. Then all that met the eye were wooded slopes partly tilled by two or three farmers; hill-tops thickly sprinkled with scrub-oaks, and lowlands covered with underbrush of alder; but between the Potomac, slow widening to meet the sea, the bluffs, a mile and a half away, and the heights of Rock Creek at Georgetown and of the Eastern Branch, five miles apart, there lay a spacious amphitheatre of such gentle slopes and useful levels that the attention of the young surveyor was quickly attracted to it.

Washington, always more of a merchant and an engineer than an artist, had thoughts of a great commercial city here, with the navigable Potomac, reaching to the sea, to help it in the race for supremacy. The site of this future city he often passed on his way to and from Georgetown, and later, when occupied with public cares, while travelling from the North to his



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home at Mount Vernon. The Indians for generations used this site as a meeting-place, holding there many council-fires, and this legislative and governmental use of the ground by the red men, traditions of which survived all through Washington's life, may have suggested to him a similar use by the new possessors of the soil.

However this may have been, there is no doubt that Washington was the first and foremost champion of the location of the federal capital on the banks of the Potomac; and his letters offer abundant evidence that it was with more than his usual zeal and hopefulness that, early in 1791, he set about the work of transforming an isolated tract of farm land into a centre of legislation for half a continent. The private owners of the land proved a source of vexation and of slight delay. These, for the most part, were the descendants of a little band of Scotch and Irish, settled on the land for a hundred years or more, who had inherited from their fathers habits of thrift and the ability, on occasion, to drive a hard bargain.

Aged David Burnes, a justice of the peace and a tobacco planter in a small way, proved the most stubborn and grasping of all. Even



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Washington was at first unable to do anything with " obstinate Mr. Burnes," who did not want a capital at his front door, and did not care whether or not the seat of government came to the banks of the Potomac. Washington argued with him for several days, explaining to him the advantages he was resisting; to all of which, so the tradition runs, Burnes made reply,—

" I suppose you think people here are going to take every grist that comes from you as pure grain; but what would you have been if you had not married the widow Custis?"

Small wonder that Washington, losing patience in the face of this ill-tempered rejoinder, bluntly informed crusty David that the government wanted his land and proposed getting it in one way or another. Burnes, thereupon, capitulated, and on March 30, 1791, joined the other owners of the site in an agreement to convey to the government, out of their farms, all the land which was needed for streets, avenues, and public reservations, free of cost. The owners also agreed to sell the land needed for public buildings and improvements for one hundred and twenty-five dollars per acre. All the rest the government divided into building



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lots and apportioned between itself and the owners. The small lots were to be sold by the government, and out of the proceeds payment was to be made for the large ones. In this way, without advancing a dollar and at a total cost of thirty-six thousand dollars, the government acquired a tract of six hundred acres in the heart of the city. The ten thousand one hundred and thirty-six building lots assigned to it ultimately proved to be worth eight hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and now represent a value of seventy million dollars. Shrewd financier as he was, it is doubtful if Washington ever made another so good a bargain as that with Burnes and his neighbors. Burnes in parting with the acres which he did not want to see spoiled for a good farm to make a poor capital, stipulated that the modest house in which he lived should not be interfered with in the laying out of the city. This condition was agreed to by Washington, and Burnes's cottage stood until a few years ago, one of the historical curiosities of the capital.

After David Burnes, the most considerable owners of the land taken for the federal city were Samuel Davidson, Notley Young, and



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THE COTTAGE OF JOHN BURNES, WHO OWNED MUCH OF THE GROUND APPROPRIATED FOR THE CAPITAL CITY

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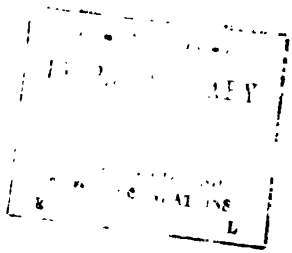

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Daniel Carroll. Young, who held nearly all of the property in the centre of the city and on the river front between Seventh and Eleventh Streets, acquired wealth from sales and leases of his property, and erected a substantial residence on G Street, South, overlooking the Potomac, where he lived in comfort until his death in the closing years of the first quarter of the last century. Worse luck attended Carroll, who owned the land to the east of Young. This gentleman, brother of the first Catholic bishop of Baltimore, cousin of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, and himself a member of the convention that framed the Constitution and of the First Congress, was so firm a believer in the future greatness of the federal city that when Stephen Girard offered him two hundred thousand dollars for a portion of his estate, he refused the offer, demanding five times that sum. Carroll's greed, however, soon wrought his undoing; the high price placed upon the lots held by him compelled many who wished land for the erection of houses and business structures to settle in the northern and western parts of the city, and the tide of population turning permanently to the north and west decided the fate



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of the eastern quarter. Thus Carroll's dream of great wealth came to a luckless ending. All that he could leave his heirs when he died was a heavily encumbered estate, and so late as 1873 six acres of the Carroll tract, upon which his descendants, during a period of eighty years, had paid sixteen thousand dollars in taxes,—this in the hope of a profitable sale,—were finally disposed of for three thousand six hundred dollars.

Carroll's splendid confidence in the value of his holdings may have been due in part to the pride which the pioneer always takes in his work, for he was one of the three commissioners selected by Washington to have entire charge of the surveying and laying out of the district and the erection of the necessary public buildings. The other two were Thomas Johnson, of Maryland, and David Stuart, of Virginia, and on April 15, 1791, with impressive Masonic ceremony, and in the presence of a goodly assemblage, they laid the first boundary-stone of the district at Jones's Point, on the Virginia side of the Potomac. Early in the following September the commissioners decided to call the federal district the Territory of Columbia,—a title



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changed some years later to the District of Columbia; and the city to be established on the river bank the City of Washington,—this without the knowledge of the President, but with the hearty approval of Congress and the people.

Meanwhile, Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant had been selected by Washington and Jefferson to draw the plan of "the new federal town." L'Enfant, a Frenchman and a kinsman of D'Estaing, was a skilful military engineer who had come to America in April, 1777, in the train of Lafayette. Although then but twenty-two years of age, his skill as a designer of fortifications—it was he who planned Fort Mifflin, on the Delaware, famous for its gallant and successful resistance to the most resolutely vigorous assault of the Revolution—speedily attracted the attention of Washington, and L'Enfant was made chief of engineers under the direct command of the commander-in-chief, with the brevet of major of engineers. When the French contingent, who had so nobly served the American cause, sailed for home, in 1783, L'Enfant remained behind. Later, at the instance of Washington, he designed the insignia of the Society of the Cincinnati. The remodel-



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ling of the city hall in New York was also his work, and in other ways he clearly proved his fitness for the task now assigned him.

Major L'Enfant devoted the spring and summer of 1791 to elaborating his plans for the projected city. One point he quickly settled,—he would not plan for thirteen States and three millions of people, but for a republic of fifty States and five hundred millions; not for a single century, but for a thousand years. Dominated by this thought, he builded better and wiser than any one in his lifetime was willing to acknowledge, for truth compels the statement that the chief men of his day, meagrely educated and reared, for the most part, in the practice of the strictest private economy, were provincial and narrow in their ideas of art and government expenditure. Jefferson was the only man then conspicuous in public life who had any considerable art culture, and even Jefferson wanted the city laid out in a regularity of squares with all the streets intersecting at right angles, as in Philadelphia, and, unfortunately, in most other American cities. L'Enfant made the regular chess-board squares as Jefferson wanted, but he also put in so many



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avenues running at acute angles that the monotonous effect was happily destroyed, and the opportunity presented for making of the capital the magnificent city it has since become.

Washington desired that the building in which Congress was to hold its meetings should be located at a distance from the Executive Mansion and the other public buildings. Accordingly, L'Enfant, fixing upon the broad plateau in the eastern section as a site for the Capitol, located the other public buildings in the western section, more than a mile distant. To this arrangement John Adams, then Vice-President, entered his objection, insisting with vigor that the Capitol or Congress house should be placed in the centre of a great square of public buildings; but Washington came promptly to the defence of his own and his engineer's plans, giving as a reason for the disposition decided upon—and Washington always had an excellent reason for whatever he did—that if Congress and the executive officers were located close together, the latter would be so annoyed by the former that they would have to take their business home in order to keep up with it.

Other details determined upon by L'Enfant



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met with sharp criticism, but his plan as a whole was accepted without delay by Washington, and the author engaged to superintend its execution. L'Enfant had as assistant Andrew Ellicott, a self-educated Pennsylvania Quaker, who later in life became professor of mathematics at West Point. The streets and squares of the city were chiefly laid out by Ellicott, and before the erection of any building was permitted a survey was made and recorded, to which all subsequent building operations had to conform.

The States of Maryland and Virginia, prompted by the location of the federal capital within their borders, voted one hundred and ninety-two thousand dollars to the United States to aid in the erection of the projected public buildings, and in March, 1792, shortly after the completion of the preliminary survey of the city, Carroll and his fellow-commissioners advertised for designs for the Capitol and for "the President's House," offering in each instance a premium of five hundred dollars and a building lot to the author of the accepted design. Among the submitted designs for the Executive Mansion was one by James Hoban,



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a young architect of Charleston, South Carolina. This design, which followed that of the palace of the Duke of Leinster in Dublin, being approved, Hoban was awarded the premium and engaged at a yearly salary of a hundred pounds to superintend the construction of the mansion, which was soon given the name of White House. Tradition has it that this name was prompted by the popular regard for Martha Washington, whose early home on the Pamunky River, in Virginia, was so called. The corner-stone of the White House having been laid on October 13, 1792, in accordance with the rites of Masonry, the work of construction was begun at once, but the building was not entirely completed until ten years later.

For the Capitol sixteen designs were submitted by as many architects, but all, after careful examination, were counted unworthy of serious consideration. Soon, however, Stephen L. Hallett, a French architect residing in New York, forwarded to the commissioners a sketch of a design which met with favor, and he was invited to perfect it. Hallett had not completed his labors when Dr. William Thornton, a clever native of the West Indies, who had lately



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taken up his residence in the United States, submitted a design to Washington and Jefferson which so pleased them that the President requested its adoption, suggesting that, as Thornton had no practical knowledge of architecture, the execution of his design be intrusted to Hallett.

This was done, Thornton's design being accepted by the commissioners, and Hallett appointed supervising architect with a salary of four hundred pounds a year. The corner-stone of what was to be the north wing of the Capitol was laid on September 18, 1793, on which occasion Washington delivered an oration and the Grand Master of the Maryland Masons an appropriate address. "After the ceremony," to quote a contemporary account of the affair, "the assemblage retired to an extensive booth, where they enjoyed a barbecue feast."

Ill-timed and unseemly bickerings followed this jocund and peaceful incident. Hallett, the architect, quarrelled with Thornton, who had now become one of the commissioners of the district, and when requested to surrender his various drawings and designs, peremptorily declined to do so. He was, therefore, dismissed,



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and his place given to George Hadfield, an Englishman vouched for by Benjamin West. When Hadfield in his turn quarrelled with the commissioners and resigned, work on the Capitol was continued by Hoban, the architect of the White House, and the north wing completed in 1800. Hoban resided in Washington until his death in 1833, and accumulated a large estate by the practice of his profession.

Major L'Enfant, the designer of the city, was not so fortunate as Hoban, for before work began on either the White House or the Capitol he was dismissed from his office by order of Washington. L'Enfant was not wholly at fault in the matter. Daniel Carroll, without regard for the plans of the engineer, had begun the erection of a large brick house in the middle of New Jersey Avenue, whereupon L'Enfant, who considered himself as a military officer responsible only to the government, had his assistants attack it and raze it to the ground. This threw Carroll into a violent rage, and brought a letter from Washington warning L'Enfant that he and everybody were subordinate to the common law. Furthermore, the President ordered the rebuilding of Carroll's



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house precisely as it was before, but, very wisely, not in the middle of New Jersey Avenue.

L'Enfant after that had at least one resolute enemy among the commissioners of the district, and soon another unfortunate incident placed him at odds with the other two. The commissioners, to secure much-needed funds, advertised a public sale of lots to take place in October, 1791, but L'Enfant, when asked to do so, refused to give up his plans to be examined by prospective purchasers that they might buy lands wherever they wished, claiming that if his maps were published speculators would at once leap upon the best lands in his vistas and public squares and raise huddles of shanties, which would permanently disfigure the city.

This contention, viewed in the light of experience, does not seem an unreasonable one, but to Washington it smacked dangerously of insubordination, and in a letter to the commissioners he authorized them to dismiss L'Enfant. "Men who possess talents which fit them for peculiar purposes," wrote the President, "are almost invariably under the influence of untoward dispositions, or a sottish pride, or possessed of some other disqualification by which



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they plague all those with whom they are concerned. But I did not expect to meet with such perverseness in Major L'Enfant as his late conduct exhibited."

A curious instance of the poverty and economy of L'Enfant's time is found in the fact that for planning the federal city and giving his personal attention for many months to the survey and preliminary operations he was paid the small sum of two thousand five hundred dollars. Ellicott, who succeeded him, was accused of greediness because he desired to be paid five dollars per day and expenses, and was finally induced by Jefferson to forego reimbursement. L'Enfant continued to live in the city he had planned and was long a familiar figure on its streets, clad usually in "blue military coat, buttoned close to the chin, broadcloth breeches, cavalry boots, a napless, bell-crowned hat upon his head, and swinging as he walked a hickory cane with a silver top." Towards the close of his life he became a petitioner before Congress for a redress of his real and fancied wrongs, but little heed was paid to his appeals, and in June, 1825, he died, a disappointed and broken old man.



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Differences with L'Enfant, Hallett, and the rest were not the only obstacles with which the builders of the federal city were compelled to contend. Most serious and embarrassing of all was the ever-present need of money. It had been hoped that before the sums subscribed by Virginia and Maryland were expended the sales of lots would supply the balance needed to complete the public buildings. This expectation, however, was only partly realized. After the first influx of speculators—among whom none bought more largely and lost more heavily than Robert Morris, the "superintendent of finance" and friend of the government in the dark days of 1781—the sale of real estate languished. Foreigners had more confidence than natives in the success of the experiment. Engraved plans of the city were widely distributed abroad; Congress passed a law allowing aliens to hold land in the city; and for a time lots brought absurdly high prices in London. The home trade, however, ceased almost entirely after 1794, while many of the earlier contracts for lots were repudiated by buyers unable to fulfil their agreements, or who had taken alarm from the hurtful rumor, industriously spread, that Congress



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would never remove to the Potomac, but would remain at Philadelphia.

Before the walls of the Capitol and the White House had reached the roof-line the commissioners were obliged, in 1796, to ask Congress for an appropriation of money. Congress responded to this request by authorizing them to negotiate a loan of eight hundred thousand dollars. This loan was guaranteed by the government, but the money was not to be had on the terms proposed. However, after some delay, the State of Maryland, at Washington's urgent personal request, took two-thirds of the loan, stipulating that the commissioners, two of whom were men of means, should add their individual guarantee to that of the government. Congress, in 1798, again appealed to by the commissioners, voted an appropriation of one hundred thousand dollars, and in the following year the State of Maryland lent them half that sum, requiring, as before, private security for its repayment.

Work on the Capitol and the White House made fair progress as a result of these efforts, and two other public buildings were begun and pushed towards completion. The last named, brick structures, two stories high and contain-



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ing thirty rooms each, were erected at the corners of the twenty-acre plot set down on L'Enfant's design as "the President's Grounds." One, known as the Treasury Department building, occupied a portion of the site of the present Treasury building. The War Office, as the other building was called, occupied the site of the central portion of the present State, War, and Navy buildings. This latter building, enlarged by the addition of a third story and a wing, was known in later years as the Navy Department building, being removed in 1871 to make room for the new building.

When Washington last beheld the city which bears his name, shortly before his death in 1799, it was a straggling settlement in the woods, almost wholly devoid of streets, with thirty or forty residences,—these, for the most part, small and uncomfortable,—and an unfinished Capitol and President's House. John Cotton Smith, then a member of Congress from Connecticut, has left a lively record of his impressions of the Capitol when he saw it for the first time, a few months after Washington's death. Smith writes:

"Our approach to the city was accompanied



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with sensations not easily described. One wing of the Capitol only had been erected, which, with the President's House, a mile distant from it, both constructed with white sandstone, were shining objects in dismal contrast with the scene around them. Instead of recognizing the avenues and streets portrayed on the plan of the city, not one was visible, unless we except a road, with two buildings on each side of it, called New Jersey Avenue. The Pennsylvania, leading, as laid down on paper, from the Capitol to the Presidential mansion, was then nearly the whole distance a deep morass covered with alder-bushes, which were cut through the intended avenue during the ensuing winter. Between the President's House and Georgetown a block of houses had been erected, which bore the name of the Six Buildings. There were also two other blocks, consisting of two or three dwelling-houses, in different directions, and now and then an isolated wooden habitation; the intervening spaces, and, indeed, the surface of the city generally, being covered with scrub-oak bushes on the higher grounds, and on the marshy soil either trees or some sort of shrubbery. Nor was the desolate aspect of the place augmented by a num-



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ber of unfinished edifices at Greenleaf's Point, and on an eminence a short distance from it, commenced by an individual whose name they bore, but the state of whose funds compelled him to abandon them, not only unfinished, but in a ruinous condition."

Indeed, for more than half a century Washington remained a sparse-built, unsightly city and a comfortless place of residence. Its growth for upward of a generation was less than six hundred a year, a rate of increase that would now put to shame the capital of a single American State, and so late as 1840 De Bacourt, the French minister, could write that Washington was "neither a city, nor a village, nor the country," but "a building-yard placed in a desolate spot, wherein living is unbearable." From 1804 to 1846, and especially after the second war with England, there were intermittent efforts in Congress to secure the removal of the capital to some other part of the Union, but during the decade in which the latter year fell a general renewal of the public buildings was projected and begun upon a scale which barred from the minds of all reasonable men the idea that they would ever be abandoned; and the several federal



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THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED

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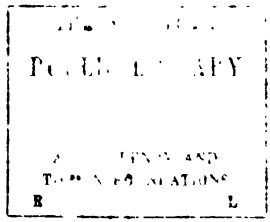


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buildings were made fitting abodes for the representatives of a great and enduring government.

The result of this activity told at once upon the capital. Its annual growth trebled, and the opening of the Civil War found it, with its sixty-two thousand population, " a big, sprawling city, magnificent in some parts, dilapidated and dirty in others." The struggle for the Union did many things for Washington. It doubled the population and brought in freedom and Northern enterprise, but more important still, by a thousand moving and glorious associations, it endeared the capital to the people of the whole country. Then came its remaking by Shepherd and his associates. Now it is a truly imperial city, and the judgment of Washington and the genius of L'Enfant have been amply vindicated.

Almost within sight of the capital which he called into being lie the remains of Washington, guarded by a grateful people with reverence and care, but no stone marks L'Enfant's grave at Bladensburg, where he died in the house of the only friend of his last days. None is needed, for the city that he planned remains his monument and epitaph.



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## CHAPTER II

### THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

IMAGINE the laborious transfer of the present seat of government to some point in the Middle West, this in contrast with the removal of the capital from Philadelphia to the banks of the Potomac, and a fair idea will be gained of the wide gulf which separates the republic of to-day from that of a hundred years ago. May, 1800, the time of the transfer, fell in a day of small things, and two or three sloops of modest size, though some of them made more than one voyage, sufficed to convey to Washington the archives of all the departments, while the officials concerned in the removal numbered seven score, including the heads of bureaus and the various clerks. The vessels arrived at their destination during the first days of June, and one can readily picture the entire population, white and black, trooping down to the river to witness the discharge of the precious cargoes. Doubtless President Adams, himself, was in the crowd, for he had left Philadelphia on May 27, and, travelling



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by way of Lancaster and York, in Pennsylvania, and Frederick and Rockville, in Maryland, on June 3 lodged at the Union Tavern in Georgetown. His visit, however, was one of inspection only, and at the end of ten days he left for his home in Quincy, Massachusetts, where he was to spend the summer.

The President's lot for the moment was a source of envy to the Cabinet and other officials whom he left behind him. Work on and about the new seat of government had been in progress for the better part of a decade, but nothing was finished, and, contrasted with the pleasant quarters at command in Philadelphia, the crude discomfort of Washington bred a feeling of surprise and disgust. "I do not perceive," Secretary Wolcott wrote to his wife, "how the members of Congress can possibly secure lodgings, unless they will consent to live like scholars in a college, or monks in a monastery, crowded ten or twenty in one house, and utterly secluded from society. . . . I have made every exertion to secure good lodgings near the office, but shall be compelled to take them at a distance of more than half a mile. There are, in fact, but few houses in any one place, and most of



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them small, miserable huts, which present an awful contrast to the public buildings. The people are poor, and, as far as I can judge, they live like fishes, by eating each other."

President Adams returned to Washington in the opening days of November, and he was joined at the end of a fortnight by his wife, the famous Abigail Adams. "I arrived here on Sunday last," runs a letter from Mrs. Adams to her daughter, one of the first written in the White House, "and without meeting any accident worth noticing, except losing ourselves when we left Baltimore, and going eight or nine miles on the Frederick road, by which means we were obliged to go the other eight through the woods, where we wandered for two hours, without finding a guide or the path. Fortunately, a straggling black came up with us, and we engaged him as a guide to extricate us out of our difficulty; but woods are all you see from Baltimore until you reach the city, which is only so in name. Here and there is a small cot, without a glass window, interspersed among the forests, through which you travel miles without seeing any human being. In the city there are buildings enough, if they were



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compact and finished, to accommodate Congress and those attached to it, but as they are, and scattered as they are, I see no great comfort in them."

How meagre was the degree of comfort which they afforded is, perhaps, best illustrated by an account set down in after-years by John Cotton Smith, a member of the House from Connecticut. "Our little party," he says, "took lodging with a Mr. Peacock, in one of the houses on the New Jersey Avenue. . . . Speaker Sedgwick was allowed a room to himself; the rest of us in pairs." The President and his family fared little better. "To assist us in this great castle," writes Mrs. Adams in the letter already quoted, "and render less attendance necessary bells are wholly wanting,—not one single one being hung through the whole house, and promises are all you can obtain. If they will put me up some bells and let me have wood enough to keep fires, I design to be pleased. . . . But, surrounded with forests, can you believe that wood is not to be had, because people cannot be found to cut and cart it? The house is made habitable, but there is not a single apartment finished. We have not the least fence, yard, or other convenience with-



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out, and the great, unfinished audience-room [now known as the East Room] I make a drying room of to hang up the clothes in. The principal stairs are not up, and will not be this winter."

So difficult was it to secure lodgings near the Capitol that many of the members of Congress when they assembled in November took refuge in Georgetown, reached only after a toilsome journey over execrable roads, but where, as partial compensation for the social poverty and material discomfort of the infant city, there was a society which called itself eminently polite. Indeed, society centred for years in Georgetown; and from thence, at the price of many mishaps on the way, came most of the guests who attended the President's levees and state dinners.

Abigail Adams was easily the most conspicuous woman of her day, whether by position or by character; in person distinguished and noble rather than beautiful. The social rites at the White House were conducted with great formality during her brief period of residence there. Ceremonious intercourse was demanded, and the rules of precedence were rigorously obeyed. The President and Mrs. Adams gave their first



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public reception on New Year's Day, 1801, receiving their guests in the second-story apartment which is now the library of the Executive Mansion. The rules established by Mrs. Washington had been continued by her successor, and the roster of Mrs. Adams's guests included only persons of official station and established reputation, or who came with suitable introduction. Full dress was exacted from all, and at the New Year's reception of which I am writing President Adams, his round, ruddy face framed by a powdered wig, wore a black velvet suit, white vest, knee-breeches, yellow gloves, silk stockings, and silver knee- and shoe-buckles. The guests formed in a circle, when the President went around and conversed with each one, after which they came up, bowed and retired.

Few unofficial personages frequented Mrs. Adams's drawing-rooms. The most considerable of these were Thomas Law, an Englishman, and Samuel Harrison Smith, editor of the newly born *National Intelligencer*. Law, a younger brother of Lord Ellenborough, had formerly held high office in British India, and had come to the United States, so the story ran, to avoid being called as a witness against War-



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ren Hastings. He brought with him half a million dollars in gold and letters of introduction to Washington, who advised him to invest his money in real estate in the new federal city, and when this advice had been followed, consented to his marriage to Annie Custis, the granddaughter of Mrs. Washington.

The investment neither of Law's affections nor of his money proved satisfactory, for he quarrelled with his wife, and his real estate, when sold after his death, did not bring one-quarter of what he had paid for it. A very eccentric man, such was his habitual absence of mind that on asking, one day, at the post-office if there were any letters for him, he was obliged to confess that he did not remember his name; but when, a moment afterwards, a friend greeted him as "Mr. Law," he hurried back, gave the address, and received his mail. An inveterate gambler, Law once sent a man to Paris with a programme for breaking the banks of the gambling-houses in that city; but the unlucky agent, instead of accomplishing his errand, lost his all, and was compelled to work his passage home, there to be reproached by his principal for his want of success.



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## The Day of Small Things

Washington's first editor, Samuel Harrison Smith, was the son of Jonathan Smith, a wealthy Philadelphia merchant, who had taken an active and patriotic part in the Revolution. The younger Smith, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, first attracted attention as the editor of the *New World* of Philadelphia. He settled in Washington, when the capital was removed to the Potomac, and on October 31, 1800, issued the first number of the *National Intelligencer,* which became, a few months later, the mouthpiece of the administration of Thomas Jefferson. The credit belongs to Smith of being the first American editor who essayed to be a moulder of public opinion as well as a chronicler of facts. "Over a faithful and comprehensive detail of facts," he wrote in his first issue, "will preside a spirit of investigation and desire to enlighten not only by fact but by reason. The tendency of public measures and the conduct of public men will be examined with candor and truth." This modest promise marked the birth of the editorial page, the beginning of a new epoch in journalism, and the ability and intelligence with which it was kept made the *Intelligencer* a tremendous influence in the re-



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public,—an influence which is yet much more than a memory. About the same time that Smith set up his press at the capital the Washington *Federalist* was issued, so that from the first the two parties which then divided public patronage and attention had their newspaper organs at the federal city. Smith remained editor of the *Intelligencer* until 1818, when he connected himself with the United States Bank as manager of its branch at Washington. He died in 1845.

A man of pith and vigor, and of extraordinary sense and courage, John Adams while President surrounded himself with men of like qualities. Oliver Wolcott, his Secretary of the Treasury, was a shrewd New Englander whom half a lifetime of office-holding had not robbed of independence of thought and action. Angered by the slanderers of his political opponents, Wolcott peremptorily resigned his post in November, 1800, and was succeeded by Samuel Dexter, who previously had been Secretary of War. Dexter, one of the really great constitutional lawyers of his day, remained until his death a familiar figure in Washington, appearing every winter in important cases before the Supreme



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Court. Benjamin Stoddert, Secretary of the Navy, had been a dashing captain of cavalry under Washington, and later a successful merchant and ship-owner in Georgetown. No man held in fuller measure the confidence and friendship of Adams. Joseph Habersham, Postmaster-General, had served as colonel in the Continental army, and remained during life one of the foremost men in Georgia. Theophilus Parsons, Attorney-General, was a profound and learned jurist, no less famous for his acrid wit than for his extraordinary attainments as a scholar and lawyer.

The dominant, masterful figure in the Cabinet of Adams, however, was John Marshall, Secretary of State. Six years an officer of foot in the patriot army and leader at forty of the Virginia bar, it was only at the urgent instance of Washington and much against his inclination that Marshall had become an office-holder, first as envoy to France, later as one of the Federalist leaders in Congress, and finally as Secretary of State under Adams. This office he filled with ability and credit, but was eagerly awaiting an early return to private life, when in January, 1801, Adams named him chief justice of the



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Supreme Court, which office he held until his death, thirty-four years later.

An agreeable tradition attaches to Marshall's appointment as chief justice, a post which of all men then living he was the one best fitted to fill. Chief Justice Oliver Ellsworth, broken in health by winter voyages to and from France, whence he had been sent as envoy, resigned his seat on the bench in November, 1800. The President, after offering the place to John Jay, who declined it, decided to confer it upon his Secretary of State. After Adams had had the matter under consideration for some time, Marshall chanced one day to suggest a new name for the place, when the President promptly said,—

"You need not give yourself further trouble, for I have made up my mind about that matter."

"I am happy to hear it," said Marshall. "May I ask whom you have fixed upon?"

"Certainly," said Adams. "I have concluded to nominate a person whom it may surprise you to hear mentioned. It is a Virginia lawyer, a plain man by the name of John Marshall."

President Adams spoke truly when he referred to Marshall as "a plain man." Tall,



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gaunt, awkward, and always ill-dressed, the great chief justice is, perhaps, best described by Judge Story, who sat upon the bench with him for many years. "His body," writes Story, "seemed as ill as his mind was well compacted; he was not only without proportion, but of members singularly knit, that dangled from each other and looked half dislocated. Habitually he dressed very carelessly in the garb, but I would not dare to say in the mode, of the last century. You would have thought he had on the old clothes of a former generation, not made for him by even some superannuated tailor of that period, but gotten from the wardrobe of some antiquated slop-shop of second-hand raiment. Shapeless as he was, he would probably have defied all fitting by whatever skill of the shears; judge, then, how the vestments of an age when apparently coats and breeches were cut for nobody in particular, and waistcoats were almost dressing-gowns, sat upon him."

Story writes, in another place, that Marshall's hair was black, his eyes small and twinkling, his forehead rather low, but his features generally harmonious; and he speaks of his chief's laugh, "too hearty for an intriguer," and



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of his good temper and unwearied patience on the bench and in the study. Marshall's uncouth garb and awkward bearing were, in truth, but the rough covering of a moral and mental diamond of the first water. Gentle, warm-hearted, and simple as a child, in the exercise of his chosen calling, nature had endowed him with an almost marvellous faculty of developing a subject by a single glance of his mind, and detecting the very point upon which every controversy depended. He comprehended the whole ground at once, and wasted no time on unessential features. Marshall as chief justice established the power of the Supreme Court as it is recognized to-day; completed the work of the Constitution in welding a loose league of States into a compact nationality, and smothered, for many years, the dangerous doctrine of State sovereignty, which, a quarter of a century after his death, convulsed the country with civil war.

The Supreme Court, when Marshall became its head, and, indeed, for nearly sixty years afterwards, held its sessions in the low-vaulted room in the basement of the Capitol, now occupied as a law library. It then had for associate justices Samuel Chase, William Cushing, Alfred



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Moore, William Paterson, and Bushrod Washington. Justice Chase had been a member of the Continental Congress, and had signed the Declaration of Independence. Later he had been chief justice of the Baltimore criminal court, and in the discharge of his duties had displayed the vigor, irascibility, and readiness to express his political opinions, even on the bench, which a dozen years later were to lead to his impeachment by the House of Representatives. Two popular men, arrested as leaders of a riot in Baltimore, refused to give bail, and the sheriff feared a rescue should he take them to prison. "Call out the *posse comitatus,* then," said Judge Chase. "Sir, no one will serve," replied the sheriff. "Summon me, then; I will be the *posse comitatus;* I will take them to jail." And the judge kept his word.

Justice Cushing was descended from a family of jurists,—his father had presided over the trial of British soldiers for the Boston massacre of 1770,—and prior to taking his seat on the supreme bench had been the first chief justice of Massachusetts under the State constitution. Justice Moore was also a judge's son, and before becoming a lawyer had been a captain of



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North Carolina dragoons during the Revolution. Justice Paterson had been brought from Ireland by his parents when a child in arms, and, reared in New Jersey, had been a member both of the Continental Congress and of the convention which framed the Constitution. Afterwards he had been United States Senator from and governor of New Jersey, Washington naming him as a justice of the Supreme Court in 1793.

The most striking figure among Marshall's associates, however, was Justice Washington. The favorite nephew of the first President, appointed by Adams in 1798, he sat on the supreme bench for thirty-one years, and was the subject of many a piquant anecdote long current at the capital. Small and thin, and deprived by excessive study of the sight of one eye, he was a rigid disciplinarian and a great stickler for etiquette. But he had also the saving gift of humor. One day, as the justices were disrobing, after having heard Senator Isham Talbot, of Kentucky, argue a case with extraordinary rapidity of utterance, Washington dryly remarked, "Well, a person of moderate wishes could hardly desire to live longer than the time



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it would take Brother Talbot to repeat moderately that four hours' speech we have just heard."

Congress met for the first time in Washington on November 17, 1800, and five days later President Adams, having driven to the Capitol in his coach of state, appeared before the two houses in joint session, and made the customary "annual speech." Both House and Senate, the latter then a leisurely body, given to short hours and frequent adjournments, found their original meeting-places ill-constructed and uncomfortable, but after the rebuilding of the Capitol in 1817 they were amply accommodated in fine halls. The present hall of the House was occupied on December 16, 1857, and the present Senate chamber on January 4, 1859, since which time the old Senate chamber has been the home of the Supreme Court.

Here and there in the memoirs and diaries of a hundred years ago one catches glimpses of curious legislative customs long since abandoned and now well-nigh forgotten. Members of the House sat with covered heads, and the practice was not discontinued until 1828. Many of the legislators being habitual snuff-takers, urns



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filled with a choice quality of the article were placed in each house, and officials were charged with the duty of keeping them replenished. Until steel pens came into use there was an official pen-maker in each house, whose duty it was to mend the goose-quills of the members; and there were also official sealers, who were intrusted with the sealing of letters and packages with red wax.

The Senators and Representatives of 1800 were, for the most part, a beardless but bewigged and bepowdered lot. The barber and hair-dresser was, therefore, an important individual, and many of the shops which soon began to dot Pennsylvania Avenue were devoted to the practice of his art,—each a morning rendezvous for persons holding congenial political views. In large cupboards with glass doors there were freshly dressed wigs in readiness for the daily visit of their owners, who would exchange them for others which needed the comb and hair-powder. "When every high-backed chair was occupied by some one in the hands of a barber, and the seats around the shop were filled with patient waiters, new-comers were greeted with cordial assurances that their turns would soon



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come, while the freshest bits of gossip were narrated to secure good humor."

The Senate in 1800 contained among its thirty-two members a generous sprinkling of Revolutionary veterans. Thomas Jefferson, who as Vice-President presided over its deliberations, had written the Declaration of Independence, and borne a weighty part in the events that followed. John Langdon, of New Hampshire, now near the close of his second and last term, had fought with Sullivan, and had pledged his last dollar to equip the brigade with which John Stark won the battle of Bennington. Samuel Livermore, Langdon's colleague, had been a useful member of the Continental Congress. James Hillhouse, of Connecticut, for ten years to come one of the most forceful of the Federalist leaders in the Senate, had served as a captain of foot-guards against the British general Tryon.

Gouverneur Morris, of New York, who, so his friends declared, bore a close physical resemblance to Washington, had been a leader in the Continental Congress. John Armstrong, Morris's colleague, had doffed his student's gown to put on a patriot uniform, and had car-



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ried from Princeton battle-field the body of the dying Mercer. Another youthful hero was Jonathan Trumbull, of New Jersey, who had entered service in 1776, a stripling of sixteen, to be mustered out seven years later with a captain's commission and a dozen campaigns to his credit. Henry Lattimer, of Delaware, had been a surgeon of the flying hospital, while brave and brainful John Eager Howard, of Maryland, the foremost member of his family in this country, had participated in almost all of the important campaigns of the Revolution, and at the battle of Cowpens had led the desperate bayonet charge which assured a patriot victory.

Stevens T. Mason, Virginia's witty and sarcastic Senator, had served as a volunteer aide to Washington at Yorktown. Wilson Cary Nicholas, of the same State, stanch friend of Jefferson and worthy member of a family "powerful in talents, in probity, and in their numbers and union," had commanded Washington's lifeguard from the opening of the Revolution until its close. Jesse Franklin, of North Carolina, had served as a major under Greene; and Charles Pinckney, of South Carolina, one of Jefferson's most active lieuten-



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ants, had been taken prisoner at the capture of Charleston, remaining such until the close of the war. Pinckney's fellow, Jacob Read, sometime major of South Carolina volunteers, also had been long a prisoner in the hands of the enemy.

Abraham Baldwin, a transplanted New Englander who was to represent Georgia in the Senate until his death, had been a chaplain under Greene, and the latter's friend and confidant. John Brown, a bronzed and wiry Indian fighter, and Kentucky's first Senator, had left school to become a member of Washington's army in the darkest hour of the Revolution, while eloquent and masterful Humphrey Marshall, of the same State, had fought his way from the ranks to a captain's commission. And finally, there was Joseph Anderson, of Tennessee, who had been a captain of the New Jersey line, and who, after eighteen years in the Senate, was to end his days as First Comptroller of the Treasury.

Three other Senators of the period demand a word. Jonathan Mason, of Massachusetts, had been a student in the law-office of John Adams, and was now his tutor's foremost defender in the Senate. Pennsylvania's senior Senator was James Ross, one of the most amply endowed but



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least remembered men of his time. The other was rich and stately William Bingham, husband of the famous beauty, Anne Willing, and father of a not less beautiful daughter, who was to become in after-years wife of the founder of the great banking house of Baring.

Not less noteworthy than their fellows of the Senate were the Revolutionary veterans of the House. Speaker Theodore Sedgwick, dignified and elegant, had upheld the patriot cause both in the field and in the halls of Congress. Nathaniel Macon, of North Carolina, for more than a score of years the most influential member on the floor of the House, described by John Randolph in his will as "the wisest, purest, and best man" he had ever known, had refused to accept a cent of pay for serving during the entire war; nor, though high commissions had been frequently offered him, could he be induced to serve anywhere save in the ranks.

More conspicuous still, by reason of their brilliant work in the field, were the venerable General Thomas Sumter, of South Carolina, now a zealous Federalist and soon to become a Senator from his State, and General Peter Muhlenberg, of Pennsylvania. Muhlenberg,



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whose services in the House dated from the adoption of the Constitution, had been a clergyman in Virginia when the Revolution opened, and he was induced by Washington to accept a colonel's commission. Members of his congregation never forgot his last sermon. "There is a time," he told them, "for all things,—a time to preach and a time to pray; but there is also a time to fight, and that time has now come." Then, pronouncing the benediction, he threw off his gown, displaying his colonel's uniform, and, striding to the door, ordered the drums to beat for recruits. A priest of this sort was sure to make a good soldier, and, by continuous hard fighting, Muhlenberg rose before the war's close to the rank of major-general.

Joseph B. Varnum, of Massachusetts, "a man of uncommon talents and most brilliant eloquence," had been among the first in his State to take the field when the Revolution opened. John Davenport, for eighteen years a member of the House from Connecticut, had been a major in the Continental army. Philip Van Cortlandt, as colonel of the Second New York Regiment, had proved his bravery in a score of battles. From Pennsylvania came



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James Smilie, long chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, who had served during the war in both military and civil capacities; and homespun Joseph Hiester, one of the surviving heroes of the dreaded "Jersey" prison-ship, who, as a colonel in the Pennsylvania line, had fought at Long Island and Germantown with all the stubborn valor of his Dutch ancestors.

Virginia was represented by Colonel Levin Powell, Washington's old comrade in arms, and by Benjamin Taliaferro, a grizzled veteran of Morgan's rifle corps, who was to serve in Congress for nearly twoscore years. Robert Williams, of North Carolina, the son of a redoubtable partisan leader, had served as adjutant-general of his State during the war. Thomas Pinckney, of South Carolina, had been aide-de-camp to Lincoln and D'Estaing. And Robert Goodloe Harper, of the same State, just now the ardent and soon to become the successful suitor of the daughter of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, could tell of much hard fighting and hard riding when a fifteen-year-old trooper under Greene.

These were not the only men of mark in the



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House. Winning and courtly Harrison Gray Otis, gifted son of a gifted sire, then had few equals among orators. Samuel W. Dana, of Connecticut, had lately begun a period of congressional service which, first in the House and later in the Senate, was to cover a round quarter-century. Connecticut had not less capable Representatives in Roger Griswold, a Federalist of the Federalists, the peer in eloquence and political sagacity of the strongest men of his time, and in John Cotton Smith, a lawyer and orator of no mean rank, beloved by his associates and respected by his foes. From New York came still youthful Edward Livingston, and from New Jersey stout Aaron Kitchell, whose broad shoulders and brawny arms were wholesome reminders of early labor at the forge and anvil.

Pennsylvania was represented by Robert Waln, Philadelphia's Quaker merchant prince; by sturdy Andrew Gregg, later to become a member of the Senate; and by Albert Gallatin, Swiss by birth but American by choice and adoption, whose strength in debate and wisdom in council were admitted by friend and foe. Delaware's Representative was James A. Bay-



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ard, whose ability had made him at the early age of thirty-four the leader of the Federalists in the House. South Carolina sent the son and namesake of patriot John Rutledge, and prominent in the Virginia delegation was Littleton Tazewell, who, though still under thirty, had already given proof of the impracticability and the extraordinary talent which were to color every stage of his public career.

Virginia also furnished one of the two members of the House most talked about by their fellows. These were John Randolph and Matthew Lyon. Randolph, now in the first year of his quarter-century of Congressional service, had already, by his poetic eloquence, his absolute honesty, and his scathing wit, made himself the Republican leader of the House, a title confirmed a few months later by his appointment as chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means. To member and visitor he presented an unmistakable figure and one not easily forgotten. Above six feet in height, with long limbs, an ill-proportioned body, and a small, round head, his descent from the Indian maiden Pocahontas appeared in the shock of coarse black hair, which he wore long, parted in the middle, and combed



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down on either side of his sallow face. His small black eyes, always expressive in their rapid glances, became doubly so in debate, and when fully aroused his " thin, high-toned voice rang through the chamber of the House like the shrill scream of an angry vixen."

Few men dared oppose Randolph in debate. One of these was Matthew Lyon, the hero of a career possible only in eighteenth century America. This exceptional man had arrived in Boston forty years before, a truant Irish lad, who had agreed as the price of his passage to become a " redemptioner." His first master sold his indentures, the consideration being a yoke of oxen. The young Celt never forgot the pit whence he was digged, but instead gloried in his humble origin, and " By the bulls that redamed me" was his favorite expression in the days of his prosperity. His servitude ended, Lyon settled in Vermont, fought under Ethan Allen at Ticonderoga, became a business man of the true pioneer type, and in 1797 was sent to Congress as an anti-Federalist, serving four years.

All his life finding delight in a controversy for its own sake, Lyon had not been long in the



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House before he had bred a dozen quarrels; and when, under strong provocation, he spat in the face of Roger Griswold, a motion to expel him lacked but a fraction of the needed two-thirds vote. Afterwards, Lyon having been jailed for violating the sedition law, the Federalists again tried to expel him, and again almost succeeded. But when, in 1803, he came to Congress from Kentucky, whence he had meanwhile removed, he found his old enemies in eclipse, and himself a hero of the Republican majority. Candid members of both parties now perceived that he was a man of sense, open to conviction, and well able to give his quota of sound advice. He served in the House until 1811, when he declined further re-election.

Lyon's strongest claim to remembrance lies in the part he played in Jefferson's first election to the Presidency. Early in 1800 Adams was again made the candidate of the Federalists, with Thomas Pinckney as his running mate, while a caucus of the Republican members of Congress nominated Jefferson for President and Aaron Burr for Vice-President. The campaign which followed these nominations was an acrimonious and exciting one. After its close, for



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weeks the result was in doubt. Even when it was found that the Republicans had won, there arose a sudden and wholly unlooked-for dilemma. Jefferson and Burr, having been voted for as nominated, for President and Vice-President, had received seventy-three votes each in the Electoral College, and the constitutional provision conferring the Presidency on the person receiving the highest number of electoral votes still remained in force. The Electoral College having failed to make choice, the election, amid unparalleled excitement, was thrown into the House of Representatives, where at the outset Burr's chances of success seemed as good as those of Jefferson.

At least, Burr so counted them, and he pushed his schemes with such adroitness and audacity that before the House began to ballot, on February 11, 1801, the friends of Jefferson threatened armed intervention in his behalf. On the first ballot eight States voted for Jefferson and six for Burr. Vermont and Maryland cast no vote, half of the Representatives of these States being Federalists. The balloting continued for a week with no change in the result. Then Matthew Lyon induced his Federalist colleague



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from Vermont, who had previously voted for Burr, to cast a blank ballot, thus assuring the vote of that State to Jefferson. The Federalist members from Delaware and Maryland, acting upon the advice of Alexander Hamilton, who opposed Burr as the greater of two evils, also agreed to put in blanks, and on the thirty-sixth ballot Jefferson secured the votes of ten States and with them the Presidency.

Burr charged his defeat to Hamilton, and in due time the latter answered with his life for his part in the election. A less tragic sequel of the contest was the passage by Congress of a constitutional amendment providing that the electors shall designate their ballots as for President and Vice-President, a change making impossible a repetition of the trouble of 1801.



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# CHAPTER III

## THE JEFFERSONIAN EPOCH

THOSE who gathered in Washington, March 4, 1801, to witness the inauguration of Thomas Jefferson beheld in the new President a tall, spare, round-shouldered, sandy-haired man of fifty-seven, whose long and rather narrow face was saved from commonplaceness by expressive gray eyes and a well-carved nose and chin. They also saw him take the first step towards what he called simplicity, but what his opponents termed vulgarity, for he walked from his lodgings to the Capitol attended only by a few friends. He read his inaugural address from the chair of the Senate, and was then sworn into office by Chief Justice Marshall, after which he returned to his lodgings as he had come,—on foot.

A fortnight later Jefferson took possession of the White House, where he at once set upon foot a profuse, even prodigal, hospitality which at last left him deeply in debt. From the first he



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kept open house, had eleven servants (slaves) from his plantation, besides a French cook and steward and an Irish coachman, and his long dining-room was always crowded with guests, who sat down at four and talked until midnight. One hears little of women among White House visitors at this period, and, truth is, it was essentially a bachelor establishment as long as Jefferson remained its occupant. He had been many years a widower when he became President. His eldest daughter, Martha, wife of her cousin, Thomas Mann Randolph, took charge of his household during two seasons only, preferring the quiet of her Virginia home to the mansion of the President. Mrs. Madison, wife of the Secretary of State, in Mrs. Randolph's absence, was the hostess on all state occasions during Jefferson's Administrations. These were not at all numerous. The first Democratic President, faithful to the notions of equality of which he was the most conspicuous champion, undertook to make the etiquette of his surroundings as simple as possible. In so doing he roughly trampled upon the courtly customs established by Washington and continued by Adams, abolished levees, and held but two receptions a year,



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—on New Year's Day and Fourth of July. The doors were then thrown open to all.

Persons at other times were privileged to call as they pleased, and the President was accessible to any one at any hour. Furthermore, he drew up a series of social rules, based on the idea that "when brought together in society all are perfectly equal, whether foreign or domestic, titled or untitled, in or out of office." In order to prevent the growth of precedence out of courtesy, he insisted that the members of his Cabinet should practise this social code at their own houses, and recommended it to all as an adherence "to the ancient usages of the country."

These changes were criticised as those of a demagogue, and, along with the careless dress of the President,—a point in which he showed an almost studied antagonism to the scrupulous proprieties of Washington,—caused frequent differences with members of the diplomatic corps. When Merry, the newly appointed British minister, went in official costume to be presented to the President at an hour previously appointed, he found himself, by his own narrative, "introduced to a man as the President of



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the United States not merely in an undress, but actually standing in slippers down at the heels, and pantaloons, coat, and underclothes indicative of utter slovenliness and indifference to appearance, but in a state of negligence actually studied."

The minister went away with the very natural conviction that the whole scene was prepared and intended as an insult, not to himself, but to the sovereign whom he represented, and when, a little later, Burr conceived his dream of an empire in the Southwest, Merry, seconded by Irujo, the Spanish minister, did not hesitate to enter into negotiations with him contemplating the aid of England and Spain in bringing about the separation of Louisiana from the Union. But England did not approve of her minister's plottings, and to his surprise recalled him. Irujo, who had married an American wife, also came to grief, being summarily dismissed for abundant cause. This was not his intrigue with Burr, but an attempt to bribe a Philadelphia newspaper to print an article criticising the Administration and taking the Spanish side of a boundary question then in dispute between our government and Spain.



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Madison, as Jefferson's Secretary of State, demanded the recall of the Spanish minister; and upon direct appeal from Madrid it was arranged that Irujo should be allowed to depart quietly, as if he were going home. The offending minister, however, took advantage of this lenity to remain while the Spanish question was being considered by Congress, and, when Madison notified him that his presence was displeasing to the President, impudently replied that he would stay in Washington as long as he pleased. Thereupon John Quincy Adams, then a member of the Senate, introduced a bill empowering the President to arrest and convey out of the country any minister who remained after his recall and after reasonable notice to leave. This brought from the Spanish government a peremptory demand on Irujo to return, which he reluctantly and much against his will obeyed.

Another member of the then small, but to Jefferson often troublesome, diplomatic corps was Turreau de Garrambouville, who had fought under Rochambeau for American independence, but of whom Mrs. Madison wrote, "I have heard sad things of Turreau, that he whips his wife and abuses her dreadfully,"—



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the wife who was a servant in the jail where he was confined during the French revolution, who rubbed out the red mark on his door placed there by the guillotiners, and whom he married because she had thus saved his life. Turreau was here from 1804 until 1811 as Napoleon's minister, and in the end proved as ungrateful to those who had given him kindly welcome as he had previously proved to his wife, for after his return to France he published a bitter criticism of the government of the United States, which he was frank enough to confess he had studied "for eight years without being able to comprehend."

Merry, Irujo, Turreau, and the other ministers at that time credited to the Washington government had their residences on the heights of Georgetown, then a homelike burgh of six thousand inhabitants, while as yet "Washington was but a huddle of booths, taverns, and gambling-houses set around about a political race-course." The town's social attractions were of no mean order. "No lack of handsome ladies," writes Sir Augustus Foster, secretary of the British legation in 1805, "for the balls at Georgetown, drawn from the families



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of the members and others who come for the season. I never saw prettier, more lovely, or better-tempered girls anywhere,—mostly from Virginia and Maryland. As there are but few of them, however, in proportion to the great number of men who frequent places of amusement, it is one of the most marrying places on the whole continent."

Another social chronicler of the period regrets to have observed among the belles of Georgetown "a fondness for the bewitching torment of play, which, when indulged in for motives of gain, and the violence of hope, fear, and even baser passions, changes the very features, in effacing that divine impression of the female countenance which is so often irresistible." The female gamester went out at last with face-powder and the ubiquitous umbrella, but with the men private play at social entertainments remained eminently fashionable for a dozen Administrations.

"How it must distress you to think that your brilliant husband gambles," cooed a Boston matron to Mrs. Clay, when, at a party given by the wife of a Cabinet minister, she came upon Mr. Clay and others playing cards.



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"Not at all, my dear," was the guileless answer; "he always wins."

In and out among the drawing-rooms of Georgetown in the first years of the century moved the slight figure of melodious but spiteful Tom Moore, for the moment self-exiled from England, and that other little great man, subtle and courtly Aaron Burr, now serving his single term as Vice-President; already busy with the treasonous plotting which, after his duel with Hamilton, was to make him an outcast and a wanderer; seeking, as was his wont, to be seen through a mist, and whipping his energies to their highest efforts to prove that "little Burr" was the equal and superior of men of larger size and pretensions. Frequent inmates of Burr's Georgetown home were his daughter Theodosia, proud and high-spirited, gifted and beautiful, and wholly devoted to her father's glooming fortunes; and handsome, youthful John Vanderlyn, whom Burr's generosity had transformed from a blacksmith's apprentice to a painter of the first rank. Vanderlyn soon went back to Paris, where he had won his first successes as an artist, and where, when Burr visited him, in ruin and distress, he



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proved himself the most grateful and helpful of friends.

Witty and robust Gilbert Stuart, Vanderlyn's former master, had his studio in Georgetown from 1803 to 1805, and "to sit to Mr. Stuart" was a favorite diversion with the belles and beaux and the eminent men and women of the time. Indeed, the federal city had no lack of distinguished visitors during this early period. Thomas Paine, lately come from France, spent the winter of 1802 at the capital, and Baron Humboldt, scientist and traveller, was a visitor in the spring of 1804. "We have lately had a great treat," wrote Mrs. Madison to a friend, "in the company of a charming Prussian baron. All the ladies say they are in love with him, notwithstanding his lack of personal charms. He is the most polite, modest, well-informed, and interesting traveller we have ever met, and is much pleased with America. I hope one day you will become acquainted with our charming Baron Humboldt. . . . He had with him a train of philosophers, who, though clever and entertaining, did not compare to the baron."

About the time that Stuart left Georgetown Joel Barlow, patriot, poet, and man of affairs,



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took up his residence there, and, with a part of the generous fortune he had acquired in Europe, established on the heights a delightful home, on which he bestowed the name of Kalorama, and which quickly became the Holland House of America. Barlow's library, in which he gave the finishing touches to his once famous "Columbiad," was said to be the largest and best in the country; his hospitality was at once generous and refined; and until 1811, when he went as minister to France to come home again no more, he was the friend and frequent host of the foremost men of his time. By no means least among Kalorama's early guests was Robert Fulton, who found an intelligent patron in Barlow, and who launched on the waters of Rock Creek the tiny forerunner of the "Clermont."

Madison while Secretary of State also resided in Georgetown, and there Dolly Madison, warm-hearted, gracious, hospitable, queened it kindly in spangled turban, paradise plumes, and rosetted shoes. It was at one of her receptions in Georgetown that a characteristic incident occurred. A shy country lad had come to pay his respects to the star of the hour. Mrs. Madison, observing him neglected and embarrassed, ap-



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proached him quickly with extended hand and said,—

"Are you William Campbell Preston, the son of my friend and kinswoman, Sally Campbell? Sit down, my son, for you are my son, and I am the first person who ever saw you in this world."

Turning then with a graciousness which charmed the young man, she introduced him to the circle of young girls about her,—a dazed, abashed boy not less interesting to her solicitude than the ambassadors in their regalia, or the officers in the lustre of full uniform, who danced attention at Dolly Madison's "at home."

Jefferson, as President, laid as heavy a hand on official as he did on social forms. When Congress met on December 8, 1801, instead of going with a state procession to the Capitol, to read his message to the two houses in joint assembly, as had been the custom of Washington and Adams, he sent it in writing by the hands of his private secretary. His reason for so doing, according to that stout Federalist William Sullivan, was because a speech could be answered and a message could not; but Sul-



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livan asserts, in almost the next sentence, that Congress was utterly subservient to Jefferson, and it could therefore have made no difference. The President's action, as a matter of fact, was termed an insult to the body he addressed, and it was finally decided that no reply should be made to a message received in so informal a manner.

Thus was abolished an honored custom. The young man who helped Jefferson to wipe it out was Meriwether Lewis, a *protégé* of the President's, who at twenty-five had resigned an army captaincy to become his secretary, and who was destined during the next four years to play a considerable part in public life. In the autumn of 1803 he carried from Jefferson to the Senate the treaty for the purchase of Louisiana, and, when that instrument had been ratified, he headed the first expedition sent out to explore the newly acquired territory. Upon his return to the East the President named him governor of the region he had explored, but his career ended soon after with a tragedy. While temporarily insane he cut his own throat,—an end not unlike that of Tobias Lear, secretary to Washington.



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Four Congresses ran their course while Jefferson was President. Each of them brought brilliant accessions to the Senate and the House. Nicholas Gilman, from 1805 until the close of his life New Hampshire's courtly and scholarly Senator, had been a member of Washington's military family, afterwards serving in the Continental Congress. Timothy Pickering, redoubtable leader of the "Essex Junto," represented Massachusetts in the Senate from 1803 until 1812, when, failing of re-election, he sat for four years in the House. John Quincy Adams was Pickering's colleague from 1803 to 1808, but then gave place to James Lloyd, who served until 1813. Lloyd had the stature of a half-grown boy, and the dress and manners of a French courtier, but those who opposed him in debate never afterwards questioned his ability or his courage.

De Witt Clinton, of New York, a giant among strong men, who came to the Senate in 1802, resigned at the end of a year to become mayor of New York City; but Samuel Latham Mitchill, Clinton's colleague, was for a dozen years one of the most capable and influential of Senators. Pennsylvania sent George Logan,



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the only strict member of the Society of Friends who ever sat in the Senate. Samuel Maclay, also of Pennsylvania, and Joseph Anderson, eighteen years a Senator from Tennessee, had both been officers in the Continental army, while John Condict, long one of New Jersey's representatives in the Senate, was another veteran of the Revolution. William Smith, twenty-three years a Senator from Maryland, had served from the opening of the War of Independence until its close, winning, by his gallant defence of Fort Mifflin, a vote of thanks and a sword from Congress. Blunt and rugged Thomas Worthington, of Ohio, who had once been a sailor before the mast, had a fitting colleague in Joseph Smith, whilom preacher and frontier politician. James A. Bayard, of Delaware, promoted from the House in 1805, sat in the Senate until the close of the second war with England.

Georgia, in 1807, sent William H. Crawford, a man of superb social and mental endowments. From South Carolina came Pierce Butler, an eloquent Celt, who proudly traced descent from the Dukes of Ormond. When Butler resigned, his place was taken and held for more than



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twenty years by John Gaillard, a gifted and gentle man, whom urbanity, firmness, and breadth of vision made an almost ideal legislator. One of the Virginia Senators was Abraham Venable, intimate friend and party adviser of Jefferson. Virginia's other Senator, Wilson Cary Nicholas, resigning in 1804, was succeeded by William B. Giles, who at once became and long remained one of the leaders of the Senate. As a parliamentary tactician Giles was unrivalled in his time. His superior in debate has never since appeared in the Senate.

However, the best-remembered man to hold a seat in the Senate during the first decade of the century was Henry Clay, who, in 1806, was sent by Kentucky, his adopted State, to serve out a term, being chosen, in 1809, to complete another term of two years. Members of the Senate saw in the new-comer a young man of thirty, tall, spare, and graceful, with a small head and narrow face, the latter saved from "unaccountable commonness" by a fascinating smile and flashing eyes, of darkest blue, that could "gaze an eagle blind."

Easier to remember were Clay's frank and



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cordial manner and the striking eloquence—his was a voice of great compass, power, and melody—with which at will he moved even a hostile assemblage to smiles and tears and enthusiasm. These qualities, enforced by a native gift for leadership, gave him quick supremacy and kept him long in the public eye. No American ever laid stronger hold on the hearts of the common people, and upon none was ever so freely bestowed the honors of high official station. During the next forty years Clay, besides serving in the Senate, was five times Speaker of the House, held the portfolio of state, rendered eminent service as a diplomat, was thrice nominated for the Presidency, and more than once declined the highest offices within the gift of the Chief Executive.

Nathaniel Macon was Speaker of the Seventh and the two ensuing Congresses. He was succeeded for a single term by Joseph B. Varnum. Noteworthy among those who took seats in the House while Macon and Varnum filled the chair were Gideon Olin, a shrewd Vermont lawyer, who had done more than any other man to bring his State into the Union; and Josiah Quincy, of Massachusetts, son and namesake



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of the Revolutionary orator, who after fourteen years' weighty service in Congress was to win enduring fame as president of Harvard College. Another new member from Massachusetts was Dr. Manasseh Cutler, an eloquent divine, now best remembered for his part in the settlement of Ohio. William Pitkin, long a member from Connecticut, soon proved himself one of the shrewdest leaders of the Federalist party. Benjamin Tallmage, of the same State, another keen, unyielding Federalist, had been an aide to Washington, and as André's custodian had walked with the latter to the scaffold.

Erastus Root, of New York, an ardent Democrat of the Clinton school, began in 1803 a period of Congressional service which, with occasional breaks, extended over thirty years. Colonel John Paterson, another New York member, had led a regiment in Arnold's invasion of Canada, and had played a hero's part at Princeton, Trenton, Saratoga, and Monmouth. From New Jersey came Henry Southard and Ebenezer Elmer, likewise fighting veterans of the Revolution. William Findley, eleven times elected to the House from Pennsylvania, had also served under Washington.



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So had William Jones and John Rea, of the same State.

Nicholas Van Dyke, a fluent and effective debater, represented Delaware. From Virginia came Thomas Newton, whose service in the House was to cover a period of thirty years, while prominent among his colleagues were two sons-in-law of Jefferson,—Thomas Mann Randolph and John W. Eppes, the latter several times chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Richard M. Johnson, of Kentucky, was twelve years a member of the House, but left his seat long enough to command a regiment of volunteers in the second war with England, and to slay in single-handed combat —a claim afterwards scouted by his partisan opponents—the Indian chief Tecumseh. Tennessee was represented by George W. Campbell, a man of deeds rather than words, who was afterwards Senator and Secretary of the Treasury, and North Carolina by William Alston, long chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Georgia sent patriot John Milledge and that able, noisy champion of State sovereignty, George M. Troup; while Ohio was served for twelve years by clear-headed Jeremiah Morrow,



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and North Carolina for an even longer period by bibulous, eccentric, but brainful Lemuel Sawyer.

Yet another member of the House during this period was John P. Van Ness, of New York, "rich, handsome, well-bred, and well-read," who, before his single term was ended, found a wife and a permanent home at the capital. The growth of the federal city made Washington's "obstinate Mr. Burnes" a rich man, and when he died he left his ever-growing fortune to his daughter, Marcia. Luther Martin, the wayward, brilliant Maryland advocate, received her into his family to be educated and trained for society in the companionship of his daughters, and when she returned to the Burnes homestead her beauty, wit, and winsomeness made her the belle of a notable coterie.

Into this coterie, when Marcia was nineteen, came John Van Ness, and laid successful suit to the heiress's heart and hand. They were married in 1802, and hard by the bride's moss-roofed cottage they built the famous Van Ness mansion, designed by Latrobe, finished in fine woods and marbles, and decorated with sculptures from Italy. Here they long dispensed a



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distinguished hospitality, and here their daughter, married to Arthur Middleton, of South Carolina, died in 1822. Then Marcia went into seclusion, and in fulfilment of a vow erected an orphan asylum and devoted her life to works of charity in schools and hospitals. At her death she was entombed with public honors in that classic mausoleum which was afterwards removed to Oak Hill Cemetery in Georgetown, where in later years the author of "Home, Sweet Home" found a home at last.

Washington during Jefferson's time grew to be a town of five thousand inhabitants. The President showed a lively interest in its future and did much to improve it. He caused Pennsylvania Avenue to be opened and planted with shade-trees in imitation of the Unter den Linden in Berlin; hastened the completion of the White House, and, in 1808, made Benjamin Henry Latrobe supervising architect of the Capitol. Latrobe, a resourceful, energetic man, and one of the best-schooled architects of his time, built the south and reconstructed the north wing after plans of his own designing, placing the Senate in a chamber modelled after the ancient



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Greek theatre, and the House in a spacious hall of the Grecian style. The wings when finished were connected by a wooden bridge, and so remained until the Capitol was reconstructed after its burning by the British in 1814.

While these improvements were making, a plan of government for the federal city had been devised and enacted by Congress. An act of incorporation approved in May, 1802, gave the residents authority to manage what concerned themselves more than the general government by providing for two legislative chambers, one of seven and the other of five members, elected annually on a general ticket, the smaller body being chosen by ballot from among the twelve. However, it was enacted that the President, and not the residents, should appoint the executive head of the district, who in turn named his subordinates,—this on the theory that a mayor thus selected would be sure to administer local affairs in harmony with the national Administration. The city's first mayor was Robert Brent, who held office for a decade. Brent was a son-in-law of Notley Young, one of the original proprietors of Washington, and for many years joined to the duties



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of mayor those of paymaster-general of the army. He built, lived, and died in the house situated on the southeast corner of Twelfth Street and Maryland Avenue, Southwest.

A supplementary act was passed by Congress in 1804 enlarging the power of the corporation in some details. This act reduced the city councils to nine members, and provided that each branch should be elected on a separate ballot, experience having quickly demonstrated the confusion of the former method. A few years later a second supplementary act was found advisable, and in 1812 the election of their mayor was conferred indirectly on the people, though his nominations of minor officials were subject to confirmation by the aldermen. This board, elected for two years, was now organized to consist of six members, while the board of councilmen consisted of nine members chosen for three years. Ere long the expansion of the administrative powers of the corporation was carried a step farther, and on May 15, 1820, all previous enactments were superseded by the "Charter of the City of Washington," which remained in force, with few and slight alterations, for over half a cen-



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tury. The corporation under this instrument exercised the powers over real and personal property, the welfare of the citizens, and the improvement of the city common to American municipalities of that period.

Not a few of the measures enacted by Washington's pioneer law-makers have the flavor of an antique time. One of these authorized the mayor, Robert Brent, to make a contract with such person as he might deem a proper one, and to give him the exclusive right to sweep the chimneys in Washington for a term of years. The chimneys were to be swept once in three months from April to October, and once in two months the rest of the year, between five and seven o'clock in the morning, or at such time as could be agreed upon between the chimney-sweep and the householder. The chimney-sweep was entitled to receive from the person so contracting with him the sum of ten cents for each story of each flue or chimney swept; and if any flue or chimney should take fire from the presence of soot within two months from the last sweeping, then the sweep should pay a fine of five dollars. These regulations were framed in April, 1807. Mayor



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Brent in due time gave notice that he had made a contract for the sweeping of the chimneys with Job Haight, who, doubtless, long filled an humble but essential place in the domestic economy of the capital.

A more important matter to receive early attention from the law-makers bore fruit in an act passed in December, 1804, to establish "a permanent institution for the education of youth in the city of Washington." This act provided for a board of trustees to superintend the public schools, and for the support of such schools appropriated a portion of the excise fees, and of the taxes on slaves and dogs. Jefferson was elected president of the first board, and in a letter dated at Monticello, August 14, 1805, gracefully accepted the position. It was also during Jefferson's Presidency that the Library of Congress came into existence. A joint committee of Congress, in 1801, expended five thousand dollars for reference books needed by the members, and which were housed in suitable rooms at the Capitol. An annual appropriation of one thousand dollars was voted for subsequent purchases, and John Beckley, clerk of the House, was made librarian. Beckley's first



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catalogue gives the titles of nine hundred and ninety-three books and magazines,—a truly modest beginning for what has become one of the great libraries of the world.

When Jefferson promised Hamilton, as a part of the price exacted for Federalist support in his contest with Burr, that he would care for the infant navy, a million dollars had been already voted by Congress to build six ships of war and purchase land for as many navy-yards in which to build them. Washington having been indicated as one of the places at which a yard should be established and a ship constructed, in March, 1800, forty acres of land were purchased for the purpose along the Eastern Branch of the Potomac, and work was at once begun on a seventy-four-gun ship. Four years later Latrobe prepared detailed plans for the completion of the establishment, and these were, in the main, adhered to in subsequent years. Captain Thomas Tingey, commandant of the yard for nearly thirty years, was a typical eighteenth century sea-dog, who, during the Revolution, had often proved his daredevil bravery, and he remained until his death a picturesque and



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striking figure in the official society of Washington.

The Louisiana Purchase, which doubled the area of the United States, remains the great measure of Jefferson's Administration, but there are other matters which received a far larger share of attention from Congress. These were what were termed the "Yazoo fraud," the impeachment of Justice Chase, and the trial for treason of Aaron Burr.

Georgia, in 1802, ceded to the United States its lands in the Yazoo country, some thirty-five million acres, out of which were afterwards carved the States of Alabama and Mississippi, whereupon certain speculators, who several years before had bought a portion of the ceded territory from the Georgia Legislature,—a sale cancelled by that body when charges of bribery were made,—demanded that the government should compensate them for the land wrongfully taken from them, as they claimed. Jefferson and his advisers deemed it "expedient to enter into a compromise on reasonable terms;" but the Federalists fiercely opposed such action, as an attempt, connived at by the President and his Cabinet, to swindle the government. All



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through the winter of 1803 the matter was acrimoniously debated in Congress and the press, John Randolph, savage and sarcastic, joining the Federalists in their assault on the Administration. In the end the bill for the relief of the claimants was defeated. Some years later, however, the Supreme Court decided in their favor, and Congress voted eight million dollars in settlement of the matter.

Justice Chase, an extreme Federalist, by relentless enforcement of the Alien and Sedition laws, had incurred the animosity of the now dominant Democratic party, and when he made use on the bench of language reflecting on the government, Jefferson's adherents in Congress secured the appointment of a House committee to inquire into his official conduct. This committee reported articles of impeachment, which were adopted, and on January 2, 1805, the justice was arraigned before the Senate. His impeachment excited much sympathy, even among his opponents, on account of his age and his services to the country, and Washington was crowded with excited visitors when, on February 9, his trial began before the Senate sitting as a high court of impeachment.



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John Randolph conducted the prosecution in behalf of the House, and the justice was defended by the Federal bull-dog, Luther Martin, "drunken, slovenly, witty, audacious, shouting with a school-boy's fun at the idea of tearing the indictment to pieces and teaching the Virginia Democrats some law." Randolph proved no match for his masterly antagonist, and the end of a fortnight brought the justice's full acquittal. He continued on the bench until his death, in 1811. There were, however, two changes in the Supreme Court during Jefferson's Presidency,—Justice Paterson, who had died, and Justice Moore, who had resigned, being succeeded by William Johnson, of North Carolina, and Brockholst Livingston, of New York. An additional member of the court having been authorized by Congress, Thomas Todd, of Kentucky, was appointed to the place in 1807.

A message sent by Jefferson to Congress in the opening days of 1807 proved that fate sometimes works quick changes. Within two years of the time when he, as Vice-President, had presided over the trial of Justice Chase, Aaron Burr, as the outcome of a mysterious expedition



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he had lately piloted down the Ohio and Mississippi, found himself charged, in the message just referred to, with plotting the disruption of the Union and the erection of an empire in the Southwest. Washington followed with anxious interest Burr's trial for treason, which began at Richmond in August, 1807. Chief Justice Marshall presided. William Wirt led the prosecution, and opposed to him were the defendant and Luther Martin, who in a final address of fourteen hours tore in shreds the evidence offered and battered into the dust the strongest positions of the prosecution. Burr's acquittal had a dramatic, even touching, sequel. Following his release, he was for some years an exile in Europe, but in the end resumed his residence in New York. There he soon secured a lucrative law practice, and there, when his former defender came to him a helpless, penniless paralytic, he gave Luther Martin a home and generous care in his own house.

Burr's trial ending as it did prompted the charge that Jefferson had been actuated by a strong personal feeling in urging the prosecution of his old rival for the Presidency. This he spiritedly denied, but had he been more



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sagely counselled he would probably have taken a different course. However, with two exceptions, respectable and now forgotten mediocrities composed his Cabinet. The exceptions were Albert Gallatin and James Madison. The former as Secretary of the Treasury left an indelible and beneficent impression upon our national system of finance, but he was of foreign birth; and it was Madison, Secretary of State, who stood out from the first as the logical successor to the Presidency.

There was little opposition to the re-election of Jefferson in 1804, Charles C. Pinckney, the Federalist candidate, receiving only fourteen electoral votes. Four years later, Madison, who had been formally nominated by a Congressional caucus, scored a triumph equally decisive, receiving one hundred and twenty-two electoral votes to forty-seven votes cast for Pinckney, again the candidate of the Federalists.



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## CHAPTER IV

### THE OLD ORDER CHANGES

A SLENDER, undersized, thin-haired, mild-visaged man of fifty-eight,—such was James Madison when, on March 4, 1809, garbed for the occasion in a plain suit of black clothes, all of American manufacture, he took the oath of office as President. Yet there were elements of pathos almost dramatic in the life which on that day reached meridian. During the first half of it Madison had been overshadowed by Jefferson, and, after work of the first order in making the Constitution and securing its adoption, had been forced for many years to labor in public life as the subordinate of one who was absent in Europe when the Constitution was made, and who was always proud to say that he was not responsible for its details.

Moreover, Madison, when finally freed from Jefferson's control and named as his successor, found himself facing a new generation which brushed aside as old-fashioned the counsel and plans of the passing generation to which the



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new President belonged. Thus Madison, patient servant of his master of the generation that was gone, was obliged to serve for eight years more under the young masters of the generation that was to come. Decrees of fate less bitter have been chosen subjects with tragic poets than the one offered by this strong man, who seemed fitted for better things, but who could not avoid what the Greeks would have called his destiny.

There was, however, no hint of coming storm on Madison's inauguration day. Salutes of cannon ushered in its dawn, and troops of militia, assembling at Georgetown and Alexandria, marched to Washington to escort the President-elect to the Capitol, while ten thousand people gathered along the way to greet the procession with waving kerchiefs and shouts of welcome. Arrived at the Capitol, Madison descended from his carriage and entered the Hall of Representatives, where, the oath of office having been administered by Chief Justice Marshall, he delivered his inaugural address. This ceremony ended, Madison reviewed the infantry drawn up to receive him, and then, escorted by cavalry, returned to his home, where



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Mrs. Madison had prepared an abundance of good cheer to be set before those who called to pay their respects to the new President.

The day ended with an inauguration ball, held at Long's Hotel. "Upward of four hundred persons," writes one who was present, "graced the scene, which was not a little enlivened by the handsome display of female fashion and beauty." The toilets, according to the standards of the day, were sumptuous, and none more so than that of Mrs. Madison,—a gorgeous robe of buff velvet in which she "looked and moved like a queen." She wore, besides, full strings of pearls upon her neck and arms, and her head nodded beneath a Paris turban set with bird-of-paradise plumes.

A singular figure, to folk of another age, seems this magnificent dame who yet had a pocket for a bandanna, which she told Henry Clay, as she wiped away the snuff, was "for rough work," while the lace handkerchief which she fluttered a moment later was her "polisher." A singular figure, also, she must have appeared at the moment to those who recalled her past, for she was the daughter of sober Quaker parents, who had found her an equally sober



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Quaker husband,—this before, a widow just turned twenty, she became the wife of Madison. Nature, however, had amply endowed Mrs. Madison for the position she was now to fill. She had tact, frankness, and a noble nature, and these, with a tenacious memory that never lost a name, won her the love of every class of people. Until her dying day, and she lived long, she was Washington's society heroine.

Among the guests at Mrs. Madison's ball none was so conspicuous as Jefferson, and never had the retiring President appeared more genial or more ready-witted. Light-hearted and full of repartee, he bred the spirit of gayety in all about him. "You see they will follow you," a friend whispered in jest, as the ladies pressed near him. "That is as it should be," was Jefferson's quick reply, "since I am too old to follow them. I remember," he added, "when Dr. Franklin's friends were taking leave of him in France, the ladies almost smothered him with embraces. On his introducing me as his successor, I told them that among the rest of his privileges I wished he would transfer this one to me. But he answered, 'No, no; you are too young a man.'" When the ex-President had finished,



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a young lady listener coyly suggested that this invidious bar no longer existed. What response Jefferson made is not recorded, but it is safe to believe that the maiden did not wait for one.

The morning after Madison's inauguration Jefferson left the capital for his home at Monticello. The social anarchy he had established eight years before was at once ended by Mrs. Madison, who introduced, as a leaven to the excessive democracy with which the late President had verified his professions of love for the people, many of the formalities of Mrs. Washington and Mrs. Adams. Dinner-parties and receptions were given every week, and the President also held levees. Mrs. Madison was assisted in the discharge of her social duties by her two sisters,—Lucy Cutts and Anna Washington, one the wife of a Representative from Maine, and the other making ready to put off her widow's garb in order to marry Justice Todd, of the Supreme Court. The trio of sisters attracted much attention and admiration. Washington Irving, in a letter written from the capital and dated January 13, 1811, thus describes his first meeting with them,



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which was also his first experience of Washington society:

"I arrived at the inn about dusk, and understanding that Mrs. Madison was to have her levee that very evening, I swore by all the gods I would be there. But how? was the question. I had got away down into Georgetown, and the persons to whom my letters of introduction were directed lived all upon Capitol Hill, about three miles off, while the President's House was exactly half-way. Here was a nonplus enough to startle any man of less enterprising spirit; but I had sworn to be there, and I determined to keep my oath. . . . There was a party of gentlemen going from the house, one of whom offered to introduce me. I cut one of my best opera flourishes, skipped into the dressing-room, popped my head into the hands of a sanguinary barber, who carried havoc and devastation into the lower regions of my face, and in a few minutes I emerged from dirt and darkness into the blazing splendor of Mrs. Madison's drawing-room. Here I was most graciously received; found a crowded collection of great and little men, of ugly old women and beautiful young ones, and in ten



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minutes was hand and glove with half of the people in the assemblage. Mrs. Madison is a fine, portly, buxom dame, who has a smile and a pleasant word for everybody. Her sisters, Mrs. Cutts and Mrs. Washington, are like the two Merry Wives of Windsor; but as to Jemmy Madison,—ah! poor Jemmy!—he is but a withered little apple-John."

"Mrs. Madison and I are sworn friends," Irving writes a month or so later, and makes one regret that he did not add an account of the men and women with whom he touched elbows at her "at homes." Nearest to her, as a matter of course, stood her husband's advisers, —resolute, white-haired George Clinton, Vice-President since 1805; Gallatin, the courtly Swiss and his high-bred American wife; tall and handsome Gideon Granger, for a dozen years head of the Post-Office Department; William Eustis, Paul Hamilton, William Pinkney, and James Monroe, Secretary of State, the last named standing now, as events proved, upon the stepping-stone to the Presidency.

Another noteworthy member of Madison's official family was his cousin, Edward Coles, who had acted as private secretary to Jefferson



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while Meriwether Lewis was away on his exploration of the Northwest, and who continued as such to Madison when the latter became President. Coles was a man well worthy of remembrance. In 1816 Daschkoff, the Russian minister at Washington, so conducted himself that Secretary Monroe was obliged to demand his recall. When the emperor of the Russias was led by Daschkoff to believe that an insult had been offered him, Madison sent Coles, then a very young man, as a special ambassador to explain matters to the emperor; and so well did he accomplish his mission that Daschkoff was not only recalled, but was sent to Siberia as an exile. Coles returned to America in 1818, and the next year, imperilled by the hatred of slavery he had nourished from boyhood, removed to Illinois, where he freed all the slaves that had been left him by his father, a wealthy Virginia planter, and gave to each head of a family one hundred and sixty acres of land. He was elected governor of Illinois three years later on account of his anti-slavery sentiments, and, after a bitter and desperate conflict, prevented the pro-slavery party from obtaining control of the State. Coles passed his last years in



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Philadelphia, where he helped to found the Republican party, and died, in 1868, at the ripe age of eighty-two.

When Edward Coles left the capital for Russia, gifted and dissipated James Payne Todd, the only child of Mrs. Madison, succeeded to the post of secretary to the President, and served as such until the opening months of Monroe's Administration. Upon the tongues of surviving gossipers run stories of Payne Todd's erratic life sufficient to fill a volume. A child in arms when his mother became the wife of a future President, he grew into a tall, handsome, and wayward youth. Though an inveterate gamester and spendthrift, piling up debts for others to pay, he had a genuine affection for his mother, while she never resisted the demands nor seems to have abridged a mother's love. Her letters are pathetic in reference to her son. "My poor boy," she would say. "Forgive his excentricities, for his heart is all right." Payne Todd survived his mother but two years, dying in 1857 on his Virginia estate, surrounded by old servants of the family.

A familiar, as well as honored, figure in Mrs. Madison's drawing-room was Joseph Story,



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who, in 1811, succeeded to the place on the Supreme Court bench left vacant by the death of Justice Chase. Story was then only thirty-two years old, but had already taken rank among the leaders of the New England bar, and during his long service as justice—he remained on the bench until his death in 1845—he stood second only to Marshall as an interpreter of the Constitution. The reports of the Supreme Court during his judicial career filled thirty-five volumes, of which his opinions, remarkable for logical clearness, apt illustration, and wealth of learning, formed the larger part. Justice Story's social gifts were also of the highest order, and his fine colloquial powers manifested themselves not in wit or epigram, but in a continuous flow of genial, sparkling remark. One other justice of the Supreme Court was appointed by Madison. This was Gabriel Duvall, of Maryland, whilom Comptroller of the Currency, who, in 1810, succeeded Justice Cushing, serving until 1836.

The Senate lost neither in ability, in debating strength, nor in striking personalities by the changes effected in its membership during the Presidency of Madison. George W. Campbell



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was again a Senator from Tennessee, which also sent Jenkin Whiteside, a man of vigorous mind, but of uncouth and rugged manners. General Thomas Posey, one of the Senators from the lately admitted State of Louisiana, and reputed son of Washington, to whom he bore a close personal resemblance, had commanded a company of Virginia riflemen during the Revolution, and at the capture of Stony Point had been one of the first to enter the enemy's works. The title of general he had won by subsequent service under Wayne against the Indians of the Northwest. Noteworthy among the other new Senators from the South were Charles Tait, of Alabama, and Isham Talbot, of Kentucky, both lawyers of more than local fame, and both able supporters in turn of Madison and Monroe.

Rhode Island's junior Senator was William Hunter, whose ten years' service was to give him wide repute as an orator and statesman, while Vermont was represented for twelve years by portly and good-looking Dudley Chase, uncle of Chief Justice Chase, and New York for an equal period by stately Rufus King, who always appeared in the Senate clad in eighteenth



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century dress,—satin coat and waistcoat, knee-breeches, silken hose, and low shoes. King's dress was in keeping with its wearer, for he had been a member of the convention that framed the Constitution, had sat in the first Federal Congress, and had served as minister to England under Washington, Adams, and Jefferson. His honorable, long-cherished ambition to become President was never realized, but forty years of almost continuous public service made him, with the possible exception of George Clinton, the most successful office-holder of his time, and endowed, as he was, with a cultivated and powerful mind, and a fine sense of honor, he held no post that he did not adorn.

Joseph B. Varnum presided over the House in the Eleventh Congress, but in November, 1811, gave way to Henry Clay, who then began his long career as a Representative, and, the only instance of the kind in our history, was at once elected Speaker by a large vote. Young men, men of a new generation, were numerous and all-powerful in the body of which Clay was thus chosen leader. From New York came Peter Buell Porter, who, in the second war with



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England, was to prove himself a brave and capable soldier. Foremost in the Pennsylvania delegation were Quaker Jonathan Roberts, one of Madison's most trusted lieutenants, and "the ready champion always ripe for combat" of the tenets of his party, and John Sergeant, a man modest as he was able, who long held a foremost place at the bar of his native Philadelphia. Thomas Ringgold, for ten years a member from Maryland, was one of the planter princes of his State; so was James Pleasants, of Virginia, Jefferson's cousin, and a man who, in the words of John Randolph, "never made an enemy nor lost a friend." One of the new members from North Carolina was Lewis Williams, whose period of service in the House was to cover nearly three decades.

Georgia sent tall and affable William Rufus King, still a long way under thirty, but already fairly started on the career which made him a conspicuous public figure until the end of his days; Tennessee, youthful Felix Grundy, who promptly gave ample proof of the qualities which twenty years later were to assure him a potential place in the Senate, and South Carolina a brilliant triumvirate made up of Langdon



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Cheeves, William Lowndes, and John Caldwell Calhoun. Cheeves, though just turned thirty-five, had long been a leader of the South Carolina bar, and at once took commanding rank in the House, where his eloquence moved Washington Irving to declare that he now knew the manner in which the great classic orators must have spoken. Cheeves declined re-election at the end of his second term. Lowndes, characterized by James Buchanan as the "ablest, purest, most unselfish statesman of his day," and by Henry Clay as "the wisest man he had ever known," remained in the House until 1822, when failing health compelled his resignation, and a little later ended a career of rarest promise.

This exceptional man, once a prominent candidate for the Presidency, is now almost forgotten, but time has dealt more kindly with the memory of Calhoun. The latter was in his thirtieth year when he entered the House in 1811, a tall, slender, black-robed figure, with pallid, thin-lipped face, indicative of the cloister; keen, unresting eyes, and a mass of coarse, black hair, combed up from the forehead and made to fall over the back of his head. Calhoun, though not an eloquent man in the com-



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mon acceptation of the term, had great ability as a debater, an analytical mind, and the habits of a student, coupled with absolute mental honesty; and these speedily made him a leader in Congress and in national affairs. He sat in the House until 1817, and then for seven years was Secretary of War under Monroe. In 1831 he resigned the Vice-Presidency, to which he had been twice elected, to enter the Senate from South Carolina, and ten years later became Secretary of State in Tyler's Cabinet. During the remainder of his days he was again a Senator. All his life he was a tireless worker, and Webster truly said of him that "he had no recreations and never seemed to feel the necessity of amusements."

Somewhat out of place among his youthful compeers of the House in Madison's time seemed one tall, smooth-shaven, elderly member, who wore at all times a powdered wig, surmounted by a cocked hat of colonial pattern, and a blue uniform faced with white, which, with the walking rapier swung habitually at his side, showed that the wearer was one of the older generation. His strong face and confident bearing bespoke also the man who had



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played a notable part in affairs, and visitors to the House never failed to ask questions about him. They were told that this unusual figure was none other than John Sevier,—he who had fought so well at King's Mountain; who had afterwards battled with such steadfast bravery against Creek and Cherokee; who had done more than any other man to settle and civilize the trans-Alleghany country; who had been three times governor of Tennessee, and who was now ending his days as a member of the House from the State he had helped to build. Twice elected to Congress, Colonel Sevier was returned for a third time in 1815, but died before he could take his seat.

Thus Sevier's public career, beginning with the first, ended with the second war with England. The latter struggle was a troublesome legacy left by Jefferson to his successor. Europe's fight against Napoleon, with England in the lead, was then in progress. The United States, in the face of the wars which it bred, maintained a strict neutrality, but lack of an adequate navy placed her at the mercy of the warring powers and forbade a proper defence of her extensive and profitable carrying trade.



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Finally, England, reviving an ancient rule, prohibited neutral ships from trading with the dependencies of any nation with which she was at war; and Napoleon retaliated with decrees which rendered vessels of the same class trading with England subject to seizure and confiscation.

Aggressions upon American commerce did not end there. British men-of-war claimed and freely exercised the right to search American ships, and, obedient to the maxim, "Once an Englishman always an Englishman," take from them all seamen who at any time had been British subjects. Hundreds of native Americans and many naturalized citizens were thus seized and impressed, England's usual excuse being that they were deserters from her navy. Affairs reached a climax in June, 1807, when Captain James Barron, of the American frigate "Chesapeake," having refused to deliver four seamen who were claimed by the commander of the British frigate "Leopard," the latter ship fired upon the "Chesapeake" while she was lying off Norfolk, killing or wounding twenty-one of her crew, and compelled Barron to deliver the men.



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Jefferson to this outrage made prompt and characteristic answer. He issued a proclamation ordering all British ships to leave the waters of the United States, and called Congress in extra session to take further action in the matter. That body, soon after it met in October, 1807, at Jefferson's instigation, passed an act forbidding vessels, foreign or domestic, to enter or leave the ports of the United States save for the purpose of coastwise trade, and for this an almost prohibitive bond was required. It was believed by its makers that this severe measure would bring England to terms, since the loss of her lucrative American market would lessen her revenues, close her factories, and rob many thousands of her people of employment.

Put to the test, however, the Embargo Act, as it was called, proved a two-edged instrument. Though it dealt England a heavy blow, she made only grudging and partial reparation for the "Chesapeake" and similar outrages. American ships, on the other hand, were driven into idleness, and American sailors, now famous the world over, were forced to leave the sea. More exasperating still, the merchants of



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the North, many of whom had been enriched by the carrying trade with the fighting nations of Europe, saw their business and their capital melt away, while their ships rotted at the docks. Small wonder, then, that the Embargo met with opposition in the shipping sections of the country, or that the New England Federalists, in and out of Congress, condemned it in savage terms, and sharply criticised Jefferson for not suspending it, as he had been empowered to do whenever he deemed it advisable. Congress in the end set aside the Embargo for a Non-Intercourse Act, which permitted trade with all nations except England and France.

Such was the state of affairs when Madison became President, with a greatly reduced Democratic majority in Congress. Matters appeared for a time to be on the mend. The younger Erskine, fair-minded and conciliatory, came to Washington as British minister, and without delay effected a just and honorable settlement of existing differences, whereat, restrictions on British commerce having been removed, the maritime States borrowed fresh courage, and a thousand Yankee ships sped across the Atlantic to snatch profit from the new conditions.



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They went, however, on a bootless quest. The Tory premier who had now supplanted Canning flouted the treaty Erskine had made, claiming that the latter had exceeded his authority, and that Madison had persuaded him to do so in the hope that the British ministry would take the course that they did. "Copenhagen" Jackson, as he was called, was sent out to succeed Erskine, an appointment, of studied purpose, most disagreeable to the Washington government. Madison declined to deal with Jackson, and Congress, when it met in November, 1809, sustained his refusal.

Madison's supporters now brought forward a navigation act excluding French and English vessels from American harbors. It passed the House, but was rejected by the Senate. Control of affairs had already passed from Madison's hands, and commerce, for the moment, was left to care for itself. With the elections of 1811, British insults to American seamen continuing, a faction came into power in Congress who meant to have war—and with England only. Fresh excuse for such a course was found in the disclosures of an adventurer named Joseph Henry, who, in February, 1812, appeared at



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Washington with a moving tale of a conspiracy by which New England was to be severed from the Union and restored to the British crown.

This man, English by birth, but married to an American woman and familiar with American affairs, had persuaded the governor-general of Canada, in 1809, to send him as a political spy to New England, arguing that, by reason of the bitter feeling engendered by the Embargo, he would find there materials for a successful revolt in favor of England. Henry visited Vermont and New Hampshire, and then passed several months in Boston, regularly sending despatches to his employer about the political situation. It would appear that he did not find any secession feeling in New England, but only stout opposition to the restriction of trade. His mission at an end, Henry demanded as compensation a lucrative office, which was refused him by his government. Thus repudiated, he made his way in hot anger to Washington, and for fifty thousand dollars sold to Madison and Monroe all the papers in the case, including important correspondence with the British minister. These were laid before Congress in March, 1812.



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Though an ardent lover of peace, Madison, by his course in the Henry affair, such were the party passion and credulity of the time, pulled down the last barrier to war with England. Clay and Calhoun, afterwards such bitter rivals, led the way to open hostility. Another embargo was ordered; new regiments were added to the regular army, and the President was authorized to enroll one hundred thousand volunteers to invade Canada for the protection of sailors' rights and free trade at sea. Madison, hoping until the last for peace, still wavered on the brink of war; but a committee, headed by Clay, waited upon him and told him that if he did not pronounce for war he should not be renominated for the Presidency at the ensuing election.

The threat worked its purpose, and on June 1 Madison sent a confidential message to Congress setting forth at length the reasons for a declaration of war against England. Both houses sat with closed doors to consider it. But even the Democrats were of divided mind. Not a few of them joined hands with the Federalists, and John Randolph, then in the flush of his powers, summoned them all into requisi-



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tion that he might vigorously resist a declaration of war. Endowed with rare foresight, he feared the rise of military men who, becoming popular favorites, would supplant civilians in the government of the country. With the people who bore its burdens, he argued, should be left the choice between peace and war; and his eloquence, at times, was that of a seer. "Do not," said he, in conclusion, "wage war against our ancestral island where Magna Charta was signed, and where the Prince of Orange achieved his bloodless revolution, wresting the sword of persecution from the hand of many kings. Our code of laws are derived from England. We are heirs of her noble language. Let us help her to put down the Corsican who is cracking in his all-devouring jaws the bones of Europe's dismembered empire. We venerate the soil on which Chaucer opened the well-springs of the imagination, where Newton unveiled the colors which compose the rainbow of peace, and where Milton added celestial strings to the harp of the universe. All the causes urged for this war will be forgotten in your treaty of peace, and possibly this Capitol may be reduced to ashes."



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Randolph spoke as a prophet, and, though he spoke without avail, there were many who were won to his way of thinking. The Democratic majority in a full House was seventy, but the bill for the declaration of war was carried by a slender majority of thirty. The vote in the Senate was seventeen to thirteen, six Democrats voting with the minority to the end, and even then, Senator Bayard declared, it would not have been carried but for differences of opinion among the Senators on other proposed measures.

Madison issued a formal declaration of war on June 18, 1812. At first, as if in confirmation of the sinister predictions of Randolph and his fellows, little save bad news came to the capital. Hull, ordered to invade Canada, was compelled, instead, to surrender the important post of Detroit, on the northern frontier; while an attack made by a force under General Van Rensselaer on one of the British outposts near Niagara was repulsed with disastrous loss. The only rifts in the cloud were the quick and brilliant victories achieved at sea. Commodores Stewart and Bainbridge, happening to be in Washington when war was declared, had



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by their spirited and timely arguments induced the Cabinet to reverse its proposed policy of not sending the navy to sea against the British; and it was well that these gallant officers were allowed to have their way, for the intrepid deeds performed by them, and by Decatur, Perry, Hull, and others, soon caused Canning to declare in Parliament that American ships manned by American tars had broken the naval invincibility of England.

Meanwhile, an exciting, though somewhat one-sided, Presidential campaign was in progress. Prior to Madison's nomination for re-election by a caucus of Congress DeWitt Clinton had been put forward as the candidate of the war wing of his party. Clinton had, in fact, been promised the party nomination in case Madison did not yield to the demands for war; and he now openly scouted the sincerity of the President's tardy change of mind and refused to leave the field. His nomination by a Democratic caucus of the New York Legislature was later endorsed by an assemblage in New York City, the first gathering of its kind in our history which closely resembled a political convention. The Federalists also formally endorsed



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Clinton, but a portion of the party went over to Madison, who was chosen by one hundred and twenty-eight electoral votes, his opponent receiving only eighty-nine.



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## CHAPTER V

### WASHINGTON IN ALIEN HANDS

THE wife of William W. Seaton, editor of the *National Intelligencer,* gives in one of her letters a diverting account of the second inauguration of Madison on March 4, 1813. "Escorted by the Alexandria, Georgetown, and city companies," writes Mrs. Seaton, "the President proceeded to the Capitol. Judge Marshall and the associate judges preceded him and placed themselves in front of the Speaker's chair, from whence the Chief Magistrate delivered his inaugural address; but his voice was so low and the audience so very great that scarcely a word could be distinguished. On concluding, the oath of office was administered by the chief justice, and the little man was accompanied on his return to the palace by the multitude, for every creature that could afford twenty-five cents for hack hire was present."

Madison's second term had a gloomy opening. Affairs in the field still failed to prosper.



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Dearborn, appointed to the chief command of the American forces, failed in an attempt to invade Canada, and spoiled past mending the soldierly reputation he had won in the Revolution. The opening days of September, 1813, brought the cheering news of Perry's splendid victory on Lake Erie, and a month later came despatches from Harrison saying that he had fought and won the battle of the Thames,—thus recovering the territory surrendered by Hull. These successes, however, were offset by Wilkinson's abortive advance on Montreal, the loss of Fort George, and the blockade of the Atlantic coast, whose towns Admiral Cockburn and his sailors robbed, burned, and harried at will.

The brilliant naval achievements of the previous year were also wanting. Worse still, at the opening of 1814—Napoleon's power having been broken at Leipsic—the British fleets in American waters were greatly increased, and it became evident that England, with the veteran troops now at her command, could, if she elected to do so, speedily overwhelm the Americans. To no one was the threatened peril clearer than to Madison; and, when the British



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ministry offered to negotiate for peace, the offer was at once accepted, five commissioners being appointed to meet England's representatives at Göttingen, for which Ghent was afterwards substituted. Nor did the well-fought battles of Chippewa, Lundy's Lane, and Plattsburg check the earnest and growing desire for peace.

Meanwhile, in the face of new conditions, the President's Cabinet had undergone, or was about to undergo, important changes. Monroe still remained at its head, but Gallatin had been succeeded by Alexander J. Dallas as Secretary of the Treasury, and Granger by Return J. Meigs, Jr., as Postmaster-General. Richard Rush had become Attorney-General, and William Jones Secretary of the Navy, while Eustis, hopelessly incompetent, had been replaced by John Armstrong.

The new head of the War Department was, in many ways, a remarkable man. He had served as aide-de-camp to Mercer and Gates in the Revolution, and was the author of the famous Newburgh letters written to excite the army against Congress. Later he had held office in his native State of Pennsylvania; but,



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having married a sister of Chancellor Livingston, removed to New York, whence he was twice sent to the Federal Senate, leaving that body in 1804 to become minister to France, a post filled by him for a dozen years with distinguished ability. In July, 1812, he was appointed a brigadier-general, with command of New York City and its defences, and at the close of Madison's first term was made Secretary of War. It was his record as a diplomat that made Armstrong a member of the Cabinet, but in the conduct of his department he quickly gave proof of a bent for intrigue, a narrow ambition, and a harshness of method which soon caused him to be distrusted, feared, and hated by his chief and his associates.

Armstrong to qualities like these added a disregard for the future and an incapacity in the selection of instruments that approached close to official imbecility. How close was shown in striking manner when in June, 1814, word came from Gallatin, then in London, that some thousands of troops from Wellington's army were about to embark at Bermuda for Chesapeake Bay, there to join hands with Cockburn's blockading squadron in an aggressive cam-



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paign against the Americans. Madison seems to have been at once aroused to the importance of adopting effective measures for the defence of the capital; but Armstrong could not or would not believe that it was in danger. "The British come here!" he is reported to have said to a delegation of anxious citizens. "What should they come here for?" And he proceeded to argue the utter improbability of a hostile force leaving its fleet and marching forty miles inland to attack a town presumably well defended. As to the Potomac, its rocks and shoals and devious channels would prevent any stranger from ascending it. "The British," Armstrong concluded, "would never be so mad as to make an attempt on Washington, and it is therefore totally unnecessary to make any preparations for its defence."

Some, however, were made, in spite of the Secretary of War. The District of Columbia, Maryland, and that part of Virginia north of the Rappahannock were created a military district under command of General William H. Winder, who had performed gallant services in the Northwest, and who had lately returned from long detention as a prisoner of war in



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Canada. This officer, taking command on June 26, found neither forts nor guns, and only small detachments of the Thirty-sixth and Thirty-eighth Regular Infantry available for the defence of Washington. Thirteen regiments of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland militia had been drafted, but were not to be called into active service until the enemy should appear.

Winder entered a vigorous protest against this absurd arrangement. He urged that the men should be called at once and placed in positions between Washington and the Chesapeake, and around Baltimore, where they could be drilled, disciplined, and massed promptly at any threatened point. Winder's protest, however, passed unheeded; and great was the consternation in Washington when, in the early morning of August 20, a mounted courier brought news that a British fleet, having on board three thousand five hundred seasoned soldiers under General Robert Ross, a veteran of the peninsular campaign, had entered the Chesapeake, and that Ross, having effected a landing at Benedict's on the Potomac, forty miles below Washington, had there been re-enforced by one



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thousand marines from the blockading squadron, which, first under Cockburn and afterwards under Cochrane, as chief in command, had for some time terrorized the bay.

The British general's advance up the peninsula was marked by extreme caution. He could not, at first, believe that the path was open before him to go where he pleased, and all the English accounts of his march agree that it could have been stopped at any time had the road been obstructed by felled trees,—a simple measure of which, as will appear presently, but one in authority took thought. In fact, it was not until the marines commanded by Cockburn joined Ross that the resolution seems to have been taken to push on to Washington; and there is good reason for believing that the enemy's original plans went no further than the destruction of Commodore Barney's flotilla of gunboats, which had been a constant annoyance to the enemy in Chesapeake Bay, but had now sought safety in the upper waters of the Patuxent. Instead of sending troops to protect these boats, thus staying Ross's progress at that point, a panic-stricken Secretary of the Navy saved the British general the trouble



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of removing this impediment out of his way by ordering the fleet's destruction by fire. Commodore Barney reluctantly obeyed this ill-timed order, and then, with his seamen and marines and the few guns that he could mount, made a forced march across the peninsula to Washington.

Meantime, there reigned in the threatened capital, whence hundreds had already fled into Virginia, a confusion of counsel and worse than a confusion of effort. Winder gave excellent reasons for his belief that Annapolis was the enemy's ulterior object. Armstrong stoutly maintained that the place to be attacked was Baltimore. "They will strike somewhere," said he, "but they will not come here," adding that if Ross did, after all, make an attack on the capital, it would be "a mere Cossack hurrah," a rapid march and hasty retreat, coming as he did wholly unprepared for siege and investment. The Secretary of War's sage advice to Winder, should such an emergency arise, was to fall quietly back to the Capitol, post his twenty pieces of artillery in front of it, and fill the upper stories of that and adjacent buildings with infantry, meanwhile holding his cavalry



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in reserve for a charge the moment a recoil appeared in the British column of attack. The only sensible counsel came from General Wilkinson, who, happening to be in the city, urged that the roads in the enemy's front should be obstructed with felled trees and a column sent to make a detour and fall on his rear, while flying parties harassed his flanks, by which means he might be forced to take to his ships.

None of these things was done, and on August 23 there came an ominous despatch from Monroe, who had gone on a reconnoissance to discover the enemy's force and intentions. The Secretary of State wrote that the British were in full march towards Washington, and he urged that the records be removed and preparations made to destroy the bridges giving access to the city. To repel the attack thus rendered certain Winder had from the District of Columbia two regiments of militia and volunteers; two companies of light artillery, having each six six-pounders,—in all one thousand and seventy men under command of General Walter Smith, of Georgetown. Baltimore and its vicinity sent a brigade of two



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thousand two hundred men commanded by General Joseph Stansbury, which included two companies of volunteer artillery, each equipped with six six-pounders, and a battalion of volunteer riflemen, led by William Pinkney. Maryland furnished two other regiments of militia, eleven hundred strong, and Virginia a militia regiment of seven hundred men. There were besides three hundred regulars under Lieutenant-Colonel William Scott, five hundred and twenty sailors and marines under Barney, a squadron of United States dragoons, various companies of volunteers, and twenty-six pieces of artillery.

It will be seen that Winder's hastily gathered army numbered in all six thousand men; but it contained only nine hundred regulars with which to oppose the four thousand five hundred veterans under Ross. The latter, from his landing-place at Benedict's, marched, on August 20, towards Nottingham, a small town fifteen miles farther up the Patuxent, which he reached in the late afternoon of the second day. Early the next morning he was again under arms, pushing inland towards Upper Marlborough and Bladensburg, but in such a way, first



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on one road and then on another, as to conceal his purpose from the American commander, who had sent detachments to different points to watch the movements of the enemy and give information.

Soon after noon of August 22 Ross reached Marlborough, and, after a twenty-four hours' rest, pushed on towards Washington, halting for the night at Melwood, twelve miles from the capital. Breaking camp at dawn of August 24, he came soon to a fork of the road, one branch of which ran northward to Bladensburg and the other westward to the bridge over the Eastern Branch of the Potomac at Washington. Here Ross made a feint of taking the latter road, but no sooner had his last column entered it than he reversed front and marched along the Bladensburg road towards that town. Winder, with the main body of his command, had taken position to dispute the passage of the Eastern Branch bridge, but the enemy's route being now apparent, he hurried his troops to Bladensburg, where Stansbury's Maryland brigade had already been posted to check Ross, should he advance in that direction.

Winder reached Bladensburg at noon, and



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disposed his forces in a rising field, between the Washington turnpike and Georgetown post road, which here came together at an angle of forty-five degrees. Barney's sailors and marines, with three eight-pounders, were halted on the Washington pike, nearer the city and a mile in the rear of the main forces. The position selected by Winder was a commanding one, but he had little confidence in himself and less in his troops. Worse still, he listened to the conflicting advice on all sides, and without remonstrance permitted Monroe, almost at the last moment, to change his disposition of troops.

Armstrong and Madison were also on the field, the former giving his last instructions and admonitions to the now bewildered general. As the enemy's advance came into sight, with bayonets glistening, drums beating, and standards waving, the President, who had previously occupied himself with pencilled bulletins to his wife at Washington, urging her to flight, turned to his comrades, so Wilkinson asserts, and said, "Come, General Armstrong, come, Colonel Monroe, let us go, and leave it to the commanding general." Whereupon they all clambered into a waiting carriage and drove



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rapidly away in the direction of Washington. Much sport was afterwards made of this retreat of the President and his Cabinet from the field of battle; and a New York newspaper declared that should some Walter Scott of a later century pen a poem on the battle of Bladensburg, he might fittingly conclude with the lines,—

> "Fly, Monroe, fly! Run, Armstrong, run!
> Were the last words of Madison."

It mattered little, however, to whom at the twelfth hour was left the issue of the battle, for neither Winder nor any one else could hope with five thousand raw recruits to defeat almost as many seasoned soldiers and marines. As the Congreve rockets fired by the British burst in the faces of the volunteers and militia, the latter, dismayed by those then novel and therefore terrible instruments of warfare, broke and fled, nor could their officers again rally them to the attack.

The only real resistance to the enemy's advance was made by Barney and his rear-guard of five hundred and twenty men, who, with their artillery, cut great gaps in the advancing British column and compelled it to give way. For



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more than an hour this small band of sailors and marines held their opponents at bay, and had the least support been given them might have turned the fortunes of the day; but the only body of militia that covered their flank and had not already run away fled at the first charge. Barney's men, thus exposed, were surrounded, and, with the leader and second in command both severely wounded, were compelled at last to surrender. Around them lay as many dead and wounded of the enemy as the sailors and marines had numbered at the beginning of the fight.

This ended the battle. Armstrong again urged that a force be thrown into the Capitol, but even this was no longer practicable, and the broken army, fleeing by twos and threes through the city, sought refuge on the farther side of the Potomac. The President and the heads of the departments had made their escape in advance of the retreating troops, but not before the Secretary of the Navy had ordered that the navy-yard below the city should be set on fire. The flames thus kindled lighted the way for Ross and his army, which, after a rest of several hours, marched into the city in the



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early evening, and made their way, without check, to the Capitol grounds.

The British troopers at first contented themselves with firing volleys into the windows of the Capitol, but at length, with Ross and Cockburn at their head, forced their way into the hall of the House. As his followers filled the apartment, Cockburn, according to one of the stories of the time, leaped into the Speaker's chair and shouted, "Shall this harbor of Yankee democracy be burned? All for it will say Ay." Loud cries of assent answering his question, he reversed it, pronounced it carried, and the mock resolution was executed by rockets and other combustibles applied to the chairs and furniture heaped up in the centre of the room, and fired wherever there was a fit place. The temporary wooden structure connecting the two wings readily kindled; everything that would take fire, including the library and its contents in an upper story of the Senate wing, disappeared in sheets of flames; and at the end of an hour only the walls were left of the beautiful structure that had been half a lifetime in building.

The Capitol a lurid ruin, the British, with



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Ross and Cockburn still at their head, pushed on to the White House in the hope of capturing the President and his wife. Finding no one, the torch was applied to the mansion and its contents. Next the Treasury building was fired, and then the invaders went into camp for the night on Capitol Hill. In the morning the work of destruction was resumed, nothing being spared, save the Patent Office and jail, that could be considered public property or could be put to public use. A squad of soldiers and sailors was at the same time sent to the navy-yard, which, as already stated, had by order of Secretary Jones been partially destroyed, along with one or more war-ships lying in the river. The destruction thus begun was completed by the British, who suffered a heavy loss in killed and wounded from the accidental firing of a dry well filled with munitions of war. The office of the *National Intelligencer* was also glutted,—this by the order of Cockburn, whose practices along the coast had been severely denounced by its editor. "Be sure," said Cockburn, "that all the C's are destroyed, so that the rascals can have no further means of abusing me as they have done."



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Greater damage would, no doubt, have been inflicted upon the defenceless capital but for a cyclone that burst upon it in the afternoon of August 25. "Roofs of houses," writes one of the invaders, "were torn off and carried up into the air like sheets of paper, while the rain which accompanied it was as the rushing of a mighty cataract. This lasted for two hours without intermission, during which time many of the houses spared by us were blown down, and thirty of our men, with as many more of the inhabitants, buried beneath the ruins."

The elements did not furnish the only cause for uneasiness on the part of the British commander. Rumors spread through his camp as the day wore on that an army twelve thousand strong was on its way from Virginia to recapture the city, and as soon as darkness fell orders were given for the British to retire, which they did with the utmost caution and without beat of drum, leaving their camp-fires burning brightly, lest they should be pursued, and not waiting to bury their dead or care for their wounded. Philip Freneau thus describes their arrival and exit:



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"A veteran host by veterans led,
With Ross and Cockburn at their head,
They came, they saw, they burned, and fled!"

Ross regained his ships without serious molestation on August 29. Meanwhile, a part of the British fleet had pushed up the river to Alexandria, which capitulated, August 28, on humiliating terms. Captain Gordon, the officer in command of the expedition, states that Fort Washington—lately erected under the direction of Major L'Enfant and capable of stout defence—was abandoned and the magazine blown up by the garrison without firing a gun,—thus clearing the way for his ships to reach Alexandria; and that he took from there seventy-one vessels loaded with flour, tobacco, cotton, wine, sugar, and other valuable merchandise. With little damage, despite all that could be done to oppose them, the enemy escaped with their booty. Their next move was an unsuccessful attempt upon Baltimore, where at the battle of North Point, on September 12, General Ross received a wound in the breast from which he died while on his way to the water-side for re-embarkation.

The value of the public property destroyed



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by the British troops during this three weeks' campaign was estimated at two million dollars, and that of the private property burned and captured at one-half of that sum. It is proper, however, to observe that the burning of the public buildings at Washington caused as righteous anger in England as it did in America. "Willingly," said the London *Statesman*, "would we throw a veil of oblivion over our transactions at Washington. The Cossacks spared Paris, but we spared not the capital of America." The Liverpool *Mercury*, at the close of a long denunciatory article, declared that "if the people of the United States retain any portion of that spirit with which they successfully contended for their independence, the effect of these flames will not be easily extinguished." And in the House of Commons the burning of Washington was stigmatized as "of any enterprise recorded in the annals of war, the one which most exasperated the people and least weakened the government."

One of the few Americans who acted a creditable part in the incidents attending the capture of the capital was the wife of the President, whose journal yields a vivid picture of



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those trying days. Mrs. Madison's journal was kept in the form of a letter to her sister. It was written in the White House, bears date Tuesday, August 23, 1814, and runs as follows:

"DEAR SISTER,—My husband left me yesterday morning to join General Winder. He inquired anxiously whether I had courage to remain in the Presidential house till his return, and on my assurance that I had no fear but for him and the success of our army, he left me, beseeching me to take care of myself and of the Cabinet papers, public and private. I have since received two despatches from him, written with a pencil. The last is alarming, because he desires that I should be ready at a moment's warning to enter my carriage and leave the city; that the enemy seemed stronger than had been reported, and that it might happen that they would reach the city with intention to destroy it. . . . I am accordingly ready. I have pressed as many Cabinet papers into trunks as to fill one carriage. Our private property must be sacrificed, as it is impossible to procure wagons for its transportation. I am deter-



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mined not to go myself until I see Mr. Madison safe, and he can accompany me, as I hear of much hostility towards him. . . . Disaffection stalks around us. . . . My friends are all gone; even Colonel C., with his hundred men, who were stationed as a guard in this enclosure. French John (a faithful servant), with his usual activity and resolution, offers to spike the cannon at the gate, and to lay a train of powder which would blow up the British should they enter the house. To the last proposition I positively object, without being able, however, to make him understand why all advantages in war may not be taken.

"*Wednesday morning, twelve o'clock.*—Since sunrise I have been turning my spy-glass in every direction, and watching with wearied anxiety, hoping to discern the approach of my dear husband and his friends; but, alas! I can descry only groups of military wandering in all directions, as if there were a lack of arms or spirit to fight for their own firesides!

"*Three o'clock.*—Will you believe it, my dear sister, we have had a battle or skirmish near Bladensburg, and I am still here within sound of the cannon! Mr. Madison comes not.



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May God protect him! Two messengers, covered with dust, come to bid me flee; but I wait for him. . . . At this late hour a wagon has been procured; I have had it filled with the plate and most valuable portable articles belonging to the house. Whether it will reach its destination, the Bank of Maryland, or fall into the hands of British soldiery, events must determine. Our good friend, Mr. Carroll, has come to hasten my departure, and he is in a very bad humor with me, because I insist on waiting until the large picture of General Washington is secured, and it requires to be unscrewed from the wall. This process was found too tedious for these perilous moments; I have ordered the frame to be broken and the canvas taken out. It is done, and the precious portrait is placed in the hands of two gentlemen of New York for safe-keeping. And now, dear sister, I must leave this house, or the retreating army will make me a prisoner in it, by filling up the road I am directed to take. . . . Where I shall be to-morrow I cannot tell."

Much that is misleading has been written and printed about the saving of Washington's



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portrait to which Mrs. Madison alludes in this letter. The truth is that on Tuesday afternoon George Washington Parke Custis, anxious for the safety of the picture, came from his home at Arlington to inquire what could be done to secure its preservation. Mrs. Madison assured him that it would be cared for, and, in the anxious moments which preceded flight, she did not forget her promise. John Siousa, known as French John, the door-keeper at the White House, and Magraw, the gardener, broke the frame on the dining-room wall as their mistress directed, secured the treasured portrait, and despatched it by wagon to a house near Georgetown. The portrait's safety assured, Mrs. Madison entered her carriage and was rapidly driven away in the direction of Georgetown. When the British were gone it was brought from its hiding-place, and now hangs in the East Room of the White House.

The scribblers who made merry over Madison's retreat found equal food for mirth in his wife's hasty departure from the White House, and a parody of John Gilpin's Ride" thus set forth her supposed address to her husband:



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"Sister Cutts and Cutts and I
And Cutts's children three
Will fill the coach,—and you must ride
On horseback after we."

But at the time there was little comedy in the situation to those who shared its anxiety and its real or fancied perils. Mrs. Madison's adventures bear witness of this fact. Learning before she reached Georgetown that the British had not yet entered the capital, she ordered her coachman to return towards the White House in the hope of finding the President. Great was her joy when she beheld him on horseback, accompanied by several gentlemen, on his way from the White House, whither he had gone to assure himself of her safety. He, like hundreds of others, was a fugitive seeking a place of refuge. Accompanying him and his party to the river, where they embarked for the Virginia shore, she set off for the house of a friend just across the river from Georgetown, where she spent the night watching the flames circling about the Capitol and the White House.

Before daybreak on Thursday Mrs. Madison set out for the rendezvous appointed the night before by her husband. So crowded was the roadway with retreating troops, horses, and



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wagons that she was again and again compelled to leave the carriage and tramp through the heat and dust, elbowed by soldiers and negroes, who rudely pushed her aside and insulted her with coarse and angry remarks. Thoroughly exhausted with the hardships she had undergone, it was not until late in the afternoon that she reached the appointed place of meeting,—a small tavern about sixteen miles from Washington. The President had not arrived, and his wife was at first refused entrance. In truth, it was only the breaking of the storm referred to in another place that finally induced those who had taken refuge in the house—fugitives from the city who declared that the wife of the man who had brought such misery upon them should not be sheltered under the same roof—to grant her admission.

As night fell the President and his party appeared, hungry and exhausted. Madison broke his long fast, and then sought needed rest, only to be aroused at midnight by a messenger with tidings that a party of the enemy had discovered his hiding-place and were upon his track. Once more he was compelled to face the storm, and to find refuge in the hut



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of a forester, where he spent the remainder of the night. Early Friday morning Mrs. Madison, having, obedient to a promise to her husband, adopted a disguise, left her carriage behind and continued her flight, accompanied only by a civilian and a single soldier. On the way a courier overtook her with the news that the British had withdrawn from the city, and with lightened heart she began the return journey to the capital. When she reached the Long Bridge across the Potomac she found it burned from end to end. The officer in charge of the only ferry-boat plying the river refused to transport her until she disclosed her identity. Then she was allowed to cross, and, disguised and in a strange carriage, entered Washington to find the mansion she had left only two days before a smoking ruin. The house of her sister, who was living in the city, became her temporary home, and here the President soon joined her, not to separate from her again.

The wheels of government were without delay again put in motion. With equal promptness a scapegoat was found for the disgrace and loss that had been inflicted upon the country.



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THE CAPITOL IN MONROE'S TIME—EAST FRONT

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The blame for the capital's unguarded condition rested most heavily upon the shoulders of Armstrong, the Secretary of War. It was Armstrong who a year before had ordered the destruction by American troops of the town of Newark in Canada, a causeless act of cowardice and villany, which, it was believed, had prompted the burning of Washington. Madison, on August 29, peremptorily demanded his resignation, and the next morning Armstrong left the capital. He did not die until thirty years later, but never again held public office.



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## CHAPTER VI

### THE RETURN OF PEACE

FOR upward of a year following the burning of the White House President Madison, by generous tender of its owner, had his home in the Octagon, an imposing house which still stands in good preservation at the northeast corner of New York Avenue and Eighteenth Street. This house was begun by Colonel John Tayloe in 1798, and occupied in 1801, the year following that in which the government removed from Philadelphia to Washington. It had been his intention to build a winter residence in the former city, but he changed his plans at the earnest request of Washington, who perceived that he would make a valuable addition to the society of the new capital, and who took the greatest interest in the progress of the building. Colonel Tayloe was counted the richest Virginian of his time. His estate at Mount Airy was the largest in the Old Dominion, and among his five hundred slaves were artisans of every class. His hospitality was lavish, his



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guests the most eminent men of the period. This magnificence was transferred to his Washington house during the winter months, and until his death, in 1828, the Octagon was the centre of all that was most brilliant and refined in unofficial society.

Not less brilliant was its history while the centre of official society. The President and his wife found it a house worthy of such occupants. Its circular entrance hall, marble-tiled, was heated by two picturesque stoves placed in small recesses in the wall. Another hall beyond opened into a spacious and lovely garden surrounded by a high brick wall after the English fashion. To the right was a handsome drawing-room with a fine mantel, before which Mrs. Madison was accustomed to stand to receive her guests. To the left was a dining-room of equal size and beauty. A circular room over the hall, with windows to the floor and a handsome fireplace, was President Madison's office. Here he received his Cabinet officers and other men of note, listening to their opinions and reports on the progress of the war; and here, also, on a quaintly carved table now in the Corcoran Art Gallery, he signed, February 18,



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1815, the proclamation of the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the contest with England, and had, in fact, been in process of making when the battle of Bladensburg was fought.

Nowhere was the return of peace, news of which preceded by several weeks the formal ratification of this treaty, hailed with such lively joy as in Washington. National salutes were fired; the public buildings were draped with flags, and at night countless bonfires and rockets lighted up the sky which a few months before had reflected the flames of the Capitol and the White House. The Octagon was, of course, the centre of all the joyous excitement; and one who shared the rejoicings within its walls has left a diverting account, couched in the stilted sentences of the period, of the delight with which the news of peace was received there. From darkness until midnight of the day on which the peace messenger reached Washington Mrs. Madison's drawing-room was crowded to its full capacity.

"And what a scene it was!" exclaims our author. "Among the members present were gentlemen of opposite politics, but lately arrayed against one another in continued conflict



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and fierce debate, now with elated spirits thanking God, and with softened hearts cordially felicitating one another upon the joyful intelligence which should re-establish peace. But the most conspicuous object in the room, the observed of all observers, was Mrs. Madison herself. . . . No one could doubt, who beheld the radiance of joy which lighted up her countenance and diffused its beam around, that all uncertainty was at an end, and that the government of the country had, in very truth, passed from gloom to glory. With a grace all her own, to her visitors she reciprocated heartfelt congratulations upon the glorious and happy change in the aspect of public affairs; dispensing with liberal hand to every individual the proverbial hospitalities of the house."

Not even the White House servants were forgotten in the general merry-making. Sally Coles, Mrs. Madison's cousin, rushed to the head of the basement stairs shouting, "Peace! Peace!" John Freeman, the butler, was ordered to serve out wine freely in the servants' hall; Paul Jennings, Madison's faithful slave, played the "President's March" on his fiddle, and French



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John drank so freely as to render him unfit for active service for several days. A few evenings later a grand concert was given by "Seignior" Pucci, under the patronage of the prominent society leaders of Washington, "on the much admired and fashionable King David's pedal harp," on which were performed a series of selections adapted to the public mind and including a medley of the national airs of England and America.

Subsequent discovery that the Treaty of Ghent was silent regarding most of the causes of the war dampened in a measure, but did not quench, the universal joy at the restoration of peace. The President's official shortcomings were forgiven, if not forgotten; and more truly than ever was it said that Mrs. Madison was the most popular person in the United States, beloved alike by high and low. Her receptions were more brilliant than those of former days in the White House, and the social splendor of the "peace winter" was recalled for years in the annals of Washington.

One of its best remembered features was the visit of General Andrew Jackson, who, after the treaty of peace was signed, had fought and



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won the battle of New Orleans. He at once became the chief lion of society, and many dinners were given in his honor at the President's house. The most prominent people of Washington made haste to pay him their respects, and his stay at the capital was marked by a series of balls and levees, at which the general gave evidence of the courteous and agreeable manners that seemed difficult of explanation by anything in his earlier career, and that later caused Josiah Quincy to declare him essentially "a knightly personage,—prejudiced, narrow, mistaken on many points, it might be, but vigorously a gentleman in his high sense of honor and in the natural straightforward courtesies which are easily distinguished from the veneer of policy."

One of the first acts of Congress when it met in special session in September, 1814, was, despite a determined effort to secure the removal of the capital to some other point, to vote money for the rebuilding of the White House and the Capitol. The work of restoring and refurnishing the former, at a round cost of three hundred thousand dollars, was pushed with energy by Hoban, the architect of the



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original building, and on January 2, 1818, the *National Intelligencer* was able to say,—

"The President's House for the first time since its restoration was thrown open yesterday for the general reception of visitors. It was thronged from twelve to three o'clock by an immense concourse of ladies and gentlemen, among whom were to be found the foreign ministers, heads of departments, Senators and Representatives, and others of our distinguished citizens, residents and strangers. It was gratifying to be able to salute the President of the United States with the compliments of the season in his appropriate residence."

Benjamin Henry Latrobe, the very capable architect who had previously been in charge of the Capitol, was employed to reconstruct it. His account of the state in which he found the building is most interesting. "The appearance of the ruins," to use his own words, "was perfectly terrifying." In the halls supported by columns the fire had eaten into and around the stone composing them, so that in some cases only a few inches of contact was left. Sawed and hewed timber was not readily to be had, and, as a novel expedient, cordwood piled



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closely from floor to ceiling was used to make it safe for the workmen to take down the pillars and entablature.

Latrobe says, however, that many important parts of the Capitol were wholly uninjured. The picturesque entrance to the hall of the House, the corn capitals of the Senate vestibule, the great staircase, and the vaults of the Senate chamber were entirely free of any injury which could not be easily repaired. Some of the committee-rooms of the south wing were not even soiled, but in general the wood-work was burnt in patches. A party of the British were the whole night setting fire separately to every door and window with their rockets, while chairs, desks, and other combustible materials were collected in the Supreme Court room, in order that the destruction of this hall of justice, where Marshall and his associates sat, might be complete.

Latrobe's connection with the Capitol ended in November, 1817; but to him belongs the honor of having planned, built, and rebuilt the old south wing, of having rebuilt the old north wing, and of having designed the rotunda and the centre structure. He designed and



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constructed the old Hall of Representatives, and reconstructed the old Senate chamber and Supreme Court room, with their lobbies and vestibules. The allegorical figure of History in the Car of Time, recording the acts of the legislative body of the nation, placed over the entrance of the old Hall, is also his design. The rotunda, old library, and other parts unfinished at the time of Latrobe's resignation, by reason of differences with his superiors, were completed by his successor, Charles Bulfinch, an eminent architect of Boston, whose dome, which was much higher than the one proposed by Latrobe, has since been replaced by the still loftier one of Walter. When Bulfinch took charge of the building all that part now covered by the old Congressional library, rotunda, and central porticos was a mass of earth, rubbish, and old foundation. The foundations of the basement story were broadened and the ground-floor strengthened with arches. Latrobe's general plans were followed by Bulfinch, save in the western projection of the centre, which was constructed after a plan of his own.

Latrobe, as already stated, designed the rotunda, but its execution was the work of his



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successor, after drawings by himself. Bulfinch's artistic taste was also conspicuously shown in his arrangement to remedy a mistake in the location of the building, it having been placed too far west, so as to overhang the brow of Capitol Hill instead of resting upon its level summit. The western front thus exhibiting a story lower than the eastern, he covered this exposed basement with the semicircular glacis and sloping terraces which render the western approach grand and striking in the highest degree. Bulfinch completed his labors in 1830, and until 1851 the Capitol remain unchanged.

The old Senate chamber and the old Hall of Representatives, which Latrobe made notable examples of pure classical symmetry and beauty, were used for legislative purposes for nearly half a century. The old Senate chamber, now occupied by the Supreme Court, is semicircular in form, seventy-five feet long and forty-five feet in width and height. The interior of a small dome forms its ceiling; and at the back of the chamber is a wide arch upheld by a series of columns of variegated marble with white marble capitals. On a dais in front of these marble columns formerly stood the chair of the Presi-



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dent of the Senate, and directly in front of it were the desks of the Senate officials. A small gallery, supported by iron columns, encircled the chamber, and on the wall were a number of oil-paintings, including a large portrait of Washington by the younger Peale. Arranged in concentric semicircles in the central part of the chamber were mahogany desks and chairs for the use of the Senators.

The old Hall of Representatives, now the National Statuary Hall, is semicircular in form, ninety-five feet long and fifty-seven feet high, with a dome ceiling. At the rear of the hall is a great arch with marble pillars, and extending around it is a colonnade of twenty-six columns of variegated marble with white marble capitals. The floor is of marble with mosaic tiling. When the Representatives occupied the Hall the Speaker's chair and table were placed on a rostrum four feet from the floor, back of which were crimson curtains suspended from the marble pillars supporting the great arch. Near the rostrum were tables and sofas for the clerks and reporters. The Representatives were provided with mahogany desks and comfortable arm-chairs, arranged in concentric semicircles. An



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iron railing with curtains enclosed the outer row of desks, and beyond the railing was the members' lobby. Above the lobby was a gallery with seats for about five hundred persons.

Following the destruction of the Capitol by the British, Congress met for a single session in the Union Pacific Hotel, a roomy brick structure commonly called the "Great Hotel," and situated on the square in Washington which now affords a site for the post-office building. In December, 1816, Congress leased a building which the citizens of Washington had erected near the eastern grounds of the Capitol, and held its sessions in it for three years. This building has always been known as the Old Capitol. In it John C. Calhoun died; and during the Civil War it was used as a place of confinement for Confederate and other prisoners. Henry Wirz, the keeper of Andersonville prison, was hanged in its yard in November, 1865. It is still standing, but has been much altered, and is now used for residences.

Elbridge Gerry, as Vice-President, presided over the deliberations of the Senate during a part of Madison's second term. Gerry, who died while in office, as had his predecessor, Clinton,



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was one of the striking personalities of his time. He had been a member of the Continental Congress, as well as of the convention which framed the Constitution, and was one of the few of the framers who refused to sign that instrument after its adoption. First as a Federalist and afterwards as a Democrat, he was conspicuous in public life during the first quarter of a century under the Constitution, serving in the popular branch of Congress, as an envoy to France, in the governorship of his State, and in the Vice-Presidency. It was Gerry who, while governor of Massachusetts, first devised the partisan arrangement of voting districts since called gerrymandering, after its author and earliest practical exponent. Gerry had a grandson of the same name in Congress at a later period, and several of his descendants have figured more or less conspicuously in law and literature, and in other fields of endeavor. When he died in Washington, in 1814, Congress erected a monument to his memory in the Congressional Cemetery.

Several well-remembered names were added to the roster of the Senate between 1813 and 1817. Nathaniel Macon, of North Carolina,



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left the House, in 1815, to take the seat in the Senate which he was to hold until his voluntary resignation at the age of seventy. Above the highest office the President could confer, but not above the lowest the people could give, accepting that of justice of the peace in his county, and declining those of Postmaster-General and Vice-President, Macon was a fine type of a class of public men who were in close and full sympathy with the people. He is described by a Senator who entered the chamber shortly before he left it as "always wearing the same dress,—that is to say, a suit of the same material, cut, and color, the whole cut from the same piece, in the fashion of the time of the Revolution, and always replaced by a new one before it showed age. He was neat in his person, always wore fine linen, a fine cambric stock, a fine fur hat with a brim to it, and fair top-boots,—the boots outside of the pantaloons, on the principle that leather was stronger than cloth." A severe and stringent Democrat of the Jeffersonian school, Macon's speeches in Congress were always short and to the point. Benton aptly says of him that he "spoke more good sense while getting in his chair and getting



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out of it than many delivered in long and elaborate speeches."

Jeremiah Mason, one of the greatest lawyers of his own or any other time, entered the Senate from New Hampshire in 1813, but resigned before his term expired to resume the practice of his profession. New York, in 1815, sent Nathan Sanford, an acute and vigorous advocate, who afterwards succeeded James Kent as chancellor of his State. One of the Senators from Louisiana was James Brown, who had already played a conspicuous part as a State-builder in the Southwest, and later was to close an honorable public career by noteworthy service as minister to France.

James Barbour was a member of the Senate from Virginia from 1815 until 1825. During the same period, and for five years more, his brother Philip was a member of the House. Both were long influential in the public service, patriotic men of high character, but of widely different temperaments and cast of mind. James was a man of dignified and imposing appearance, but a flowery, verbose, and rather pompous orator, who wrote and spoke in a profusely ornate style, much criticised by the sharp scholars of



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his day. Philip, on the other hand, had a signal gift for analysis and was always sparing in the use of words. The difference between the two brothers was well described by John Randolph. An acquaintance who met him descending the steps of the Capitol inquired what was going on. "Not much," was the reply. "I have been in the Senate listening to James Barbour and in the House hearing Phil. James fired at a barn door and missed it; Phil fired at a hair and split it."

Henry Clay continued Speaker of the House during the period under discussion, but when he went to Europe to aid in the making of the Treaty of Ghent, his place was taken for the time being by Langdon Cheeves. William Lowndes, as chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, was leader on the floor of the House, whose new membership included not a few strong and picturesque personalities. None of these came more quickly into prominence than did John W. Taylor, of New York, who in 1813 began a continuous service of twenty years in the House, where from the first he was one of the leaders in turn of the Democratic and Whig parties. He was twice elected



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Speaker, but is, perhaps, best remembered as the man who first openly opposed in Congress the further extension of slavery.

New Jersey was now represented by Ephraim Bateman, a distinguished physician, and by eloquent Richard Stockton, previously a Senator from that State, and the progenitor of a line of Senators. Pennsylvania set Federalist Joseph Hopkinson, still held in memory as the author of "Hail, Columbia," against that uncompromising Democrat, Charles Jared Ingersoll, an able man, of generous impulses but vindictive resentments, who could never speak of the people or government of Great Britain in terms of moderation, and whose hatred of both broke out now and then in a strain of vituperation so coarse as to shock the nerves of the more delicate. Another member from Pennsylvania was Samuel D. Ingham, a Quaker paper-maker with a gift for intrigue, who, after long service in the House and Senate, was to become Jackson's Secretary of the Treasury.

The Cincinnati district was represented by youthful John McLean, future Cabinet minister and Supreme Court justice. Another Ohio district was served by General William Henry Har-



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rison, busy for the moment in clearing his soldierly record from the aspersions cast upon it by fellow-members, and little dreaming of the high honors which time and changed conditions were to bring him. Could Harrison have foretold events he would have recognized in a strikingly handsome member from Virginia, John Tyler by name, one whose career was, in future years, to be bound up in surprising fashion with his own. Tyler was still several years under thirty, but already conspicuous as a forcible and persuasive orator when, in 1816, he was chosen to fill a vacancy in the House. He was twice re-elected, but in 1821, owing to impaired health, he declined further re-election and returned to private life.

Kentucky's contribution to new membership was a pair of political rough diamonds,—fighting, rollicking William P. Duval, the spirited original of Paulding's Nimrod Wildfire, and Ben Hardin, a coarse, rude mental giant, likened by John Randolph to "a kitchen knife sharpened on a brickbat." Maryland, as the result of a Federalist upheaval, sent Alexander Hanson, whose vitriolic pen had more than once placed his life in jeopardy, and who, ere his second



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term ended, succeeded Hobert Goodloe Harper in the Senate, serving there until his death. North Carolina, already boasting a most able delegation, furnished another member of commanding talent in William Gaston, an eloquent and broad-minded lawyer of Huguenot descent, while the Virginia Tuckers were represented by the son and namesake of patriot George Tucker, who at once took and held a prominent position as a debater and constitutional lawyer. John Forsyth came to the House from Georgia to begin, in 1813, a public career that made him governor of his State, twice Senator, and Secretary of State under two Presidents. An equally brilliant Representative from the same State was Richard Henry Wilde, one of the most scholarly men who ever sat in Congress, who has left a monument of his poetic imagination in the graceful and still popular lyric, " My Life is like the Summer Rose."

However, of the men who appeared in Congress during the second decade of the century, few will live as long in the memory of the people and none as long in the literature of the country as Daniel Webster, who in May, 1813, entered the House from his native State of New



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Hampshire. He was then thirty-one years old, but already commanded attention by his pre-eminent power of speech and singular charm of presence, and by a striking dignity of carriage and demeanor,—traits which matured with the years into that "imposing and regal personality, the effect of which is described by his contemporaries in language almost extravagant, borrowing its similes from kings, cathedrals, and mountain peaks."

Webster soon won a place in the front rank of debaters, especially on questions of finance; but the four years which he then spent in the House were a mere prelude to his great political career. He left Congress in 1817 to give himself to his legal practice, and, removing to Boston, rose rapidly to national eminence as a practitioner, an eminence that left him with no superior and with few rivals at the American bar. He reappeared in the House at the end of six years, as the member from the Boston district, and in 1827 he was elected to a seat in the Senate, which he held until, in 1841, he became Secretary of State in Harrison's Cabinet. He continued in that office under Tyler until his resignation in May, 1843, showing himself as



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able in diplomacy as in other departments of statesmanship. He was re-elected to the Senate early in 1845, but left it at the end of five years to become Fillmore's Secretary of State, which post he was holding when he died in the early autumn of 1852.

Webster's was the master-mind of the first half of the century. How profound and vital was the impress which he gave to national legislation and to national sentiment will appear from time to time in these pages. Unfortunate habits, ill-harbored ambitions, which unsettled his judgment and crooked his vision, and a lack of moral fibre and of self-confidence, prevented him from ever reaching the full and splendid measure of usefulness promised by his powerful intellect, and robbed him, more especially in his latter years, of the noblest fruit of great service,—an unbounded public confidence. And so when he died there were many who saw in him only rare gifts and matchless opportunities brought to naught by vulgar appetite and selfish ambition; but an after-generation, more impartial if not more generous in its judgments, beholds in Webster "a figure of antique mould, master of a sovereign intelligence and of vast knowledge,



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whose unanswerable arguments, couched in language at once noble, simple, and severe, welded an indissoluble and enduring Union, and who lacked but a stronger character to have become the greatest name in the political history of America."

The noblest fruit of the second war with England was increased pride in a common country, strengthened confidence in its high destinies, and a growing belief that its greatness depended altogether upon the permanency of the Union. Its close, however, left the country, for the moment, in a deplorable financial condition, and to remedy this was the first work of the Administration and of Congress. Dallas, Secretary of the Treasury, proposed, as one measure of relief for the universal distress, that a new national bank should be chartered,—the legal existence of the old one had terminated in 1811, —with increased capital and enlarged powers. Such an institution was chartered by Congress, after an extended and acrimonious debate for one-and-twenty years, with a capital of thirty-five millions, a portion of the stock to be owned by the government, which was to be represented in the management by five directors in a board



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of twenty-five. The bank was to be established in Philadelphia, with branches in all the large cities, and was to receive and disburse the public moneys without charge.

Dallas also urged that the tariff should be readjusted, but by the one he recommended the average duties on imports amounted almost to a prohibition, and was avowedly intended as a protection and encouragement to American manufactures. The non-importation policy, set on foot by Jefferson, compelled our people, who before that time had mainly depended on England for articles alike of comfort, fashion, and necessity, to establish manufactories of their own. These at the close of the war represented a heavy investment of capital, whose owners now appealed to Congress for protection against the influx of cheaper English goods which came with the reopening of the channels of trade. Their appeal was sustained by the Democratic, or Southern, party, led by Clay, Lowndes, and Calhoun, and opposed by the New England Federalists, who found their ablest spokesman in Webster.

The question was one of sectional interest rather than of abstract political economy. New



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England, with her capital invested in commerce, feared the adoption of a policy which would ruin her carrying trade; but the South was anxious to create a home market for her cotton, against which there was a discriminating duty in England, and her claims, prompted by self-interest, were shrewdly made to assume a patriotic hue. "New wars might come," argued Clay, Lowndes, and the rest. "Americans should, therefore, be able at all times to rely upon their own resources. The importation by England, our implacable enemy, of low-priced merchandise, menacing native production, was another hostile invasion." The momentum created by arguments like these could not be overcome, even by Webster. The Federalists were defeated, and the tariff of 1816 became a law.

A third measure enacted by the Fourteenth Congress demands a word. This was a bill increasing the pay of members of the House from six dollars for each day's actual attendance to fifteen hundred per year, and twice that sum to the Speaker. It met with the instant and stormy but unreasonable opposition of the country, which, to quote a contemporary account,



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"was aroused to ebullient indignation." Many members lost their seats by voting for the bill, —even Clay's return was contested on that ground,—and Congress made haste at its next session to change the compensation to eight dollars per day, which rate was retained until 1855.

Thus, with the diligent healing of old wounds and the unconscious opening of new ones, Madison's second term drew to a close. As Madison had succeeded Jefferson, so it was determined that Monroe should succeed Madison. The South swayed the Union and Virginia ruled the South. The Northern Democrats would have made a Northern man President if they could, and their choice would have fallen on Daniel D. Tompkins, of New York. Political tradition and skilful management, however, united in successful support of Monroe's elevation, and the friends of Tompkins had to be satisfied with his nomination for the powerless office of Vice-President.

The vote in the Electoral College for Monroe and Tompkins was one hundred and eighty-three, while only thirty-four was given to the opposing Federalist candidate, Rufus King. Four years later Monroe and Tompkins were



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nominated and elected for a second time, the former receiving every vote in the Electoral College save one. The Federalists had passed from the stage, and for the first time since Washington quitted office there was apparently but one political party in the United States.



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## CHAPTER VII

### HOW SLAVERY CAME INTO POLITICS

THE Presidency came to Monroe at fifty-nine as the splendid climax of more than forty years of public service. He had been a colonel of Virginia foot during the Revolution, Senator from and governor of his State, minister in turn to France, England, and Spain, and Secretary of State and of War under Madison. His inauguration as President, on March 4, 1817, was remarkable chiefly for being the first one held out of doors since the seat of government had been moved to the Potomac. There had been open-air exercises when Washington was installed in New York, but all of his successors until Monroe had been inaugurated within-doors. Some authorities state that the proposal to change to the open air in 1817 was the outcome of a bitter wrangle between the House and Senate as to the division of seats at the ceremonies.

Agreement being apparently impossible, it was suggested that by going out of doors room



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could be found for everybody, and the idea was acted upon joyfully. A platform was erected for the occasion under the unfinished portico of the Capitol, and from this Monroe, the day being balmy and beautiful, delivered his inaugural address to the largest assemblage that had yet been gathered there. No out-door exercises attended Monroe's second inauguration, rain and snow falling throughout the day; but the city was crowded with visitors, and a long and imposing procession attended the President in his journey from the White House to the Capitol and back again.

Contemporary descriptions afford a speaking portrait of the new President,—a tall, spare, gray-haired man with a grave, mild face, dignified and courteous in bearing, and dressed always with fastidious care in a dark-blue coat, buff vest, smallclothes, top-boots, and a cocked hat of Revolutionary style. Mrs. Monroe, a woman of rare social and mental endowment, was the daughter of Lawrence Kortright, a former captain of the English army. She was one of the belles of New York society when Monroe married her, in 1786, but his accession to the Presidency found her so great an invalid that she



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mingled little in the social gayeties of the capital. In amends she gave weekly drawing-rooms, which are thus described by the *National Intelligencer:*

"The secretaries, senators, foreign ministers, consuls, auditors, accountants, officers of the army and navy of every grade, farmers, merchants, parsons, priests, lawyers, judges, auctioneers, and nothingarians, all with their wives, and some with their gawky offspring, crowd to the President's House every Wednesday evening; some in shoes, most in boots, and many in spurs; some snuffing, others chewing, and many longing for their cigars and whiskey-punches left at home. Some with powdered heads, others frizzled and oiled, with some whose heads a comb has never touched, half hid by dirty collars reaching far above their ears as stiff as paste-board."

It is not to be wondered at, in the face of this moving picture of democratic equality, that early in Monroe's occupation of the White House questions of precedence, etiquette, and first visits arose to plague official society. Mrs. Monroe and her two daughters, having dwelt long in France and England, held decided opinions on



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the subject of precedence. These opinions were shared by John Quincy Adams, the new Secretary of State, who had also lived much at foreign courts; and, when a contention arose between the Senators, Cabinet officers, and diplomatic corps, he seized with eagerness the opportunity to draw up a code of etiquette touching precedence and first calls, which was generally observed until the close of his Administration. Adams's code, though, as may be readily imagined, more honored in the breach than in the observance during Jackson's stormy Presidency, is still the foundation of Washington official etiquette.

Monroe, though himself a man of commonplace quality, took care to draw about him advisers of exceptional capacity. Adams, as already noted, was made Secretary of State; William H. Crawford, Secretary of the Treasury; John C. Calhoun, Secretary of War; and Smith Thompson, Secretary of the Navy. Thompson, a man of sound learning and vigorous intellect, had been chief justice of New York when called to the Cabinet, and in 1823 was appointed to the seat in the Supreme Court left vacant by the death of Justice Livingston,



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Samuel Southard succeeding him as Secretary of the Navy.

Monroe's Attorney-General was William Wirt, who during the ensuing twelve years, for he continued to serve under the younger Adams, was often pitted with signal success against the most eminent lawyers of the land. Wirt when he took up his residence in Washington was still several years under fifty, and his manly, striking figure, handsome, intellectual face, clear, musical voice, and graceful gesture pointed him out both in the forum and the drawing-room as an exceptional personality. Single-minded devotion to his calling marked every stage of Wirt's career, but he loved knowledge for its own sake, and all his life was an unceasing student of men and of books. He delighted in contact with congenial minds, and there lingered long in Washington piquant traditions of his gift of conversation. Easy, playful, and sparkling with wit and humor, he never failed to interest his hearers.

Wirt's ablest arguments as a lawyer were those he delivered in the trial of Aaron Burr and in the famous Dartmouth College case, tried before the Supreme Court in March, 1818. It



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was in this case that Webster won peculiar lustre for his argument in behalf of the college, an argument which, expounding with masterly cogency the clause in the Constitution prohibiting State legislation in impairment of contracts, proved him a great constitutional lawyer and consummate advocate, fascinated John Marshall on the bench, and moved to tears the audience in the thronged court-room. The court sustained Webster in one of those far-reaching decisions which so fixed the interpretation of the Constitution as to add greatly to its potency as a fundamental instrument of government.

Monroe's private secretary during the greater part of his two terms was Samuel L. Gouverneur, of New York, afterwards postmaster of that city. Monroe and Gouverneur's father had married sisters, and in March, 1820, the son took to wife his cousin, Maria Monroe. The marriage ceremony, the first in the White House, was performed in the splendid East Room, then lately furnished with furniture brought from Paris, in what gossips called the "New York style," only the relatives and immediate friends of the bride being present.

Washington, however, had there been need,



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could have furnished a brilliant company to grace the occasion. Great Britain was then represented at the American capital by Sir Charles Bagot, subsequently governor-general of Canada, whose beautiful wife was the daughter of Lord Mornington and the niece of Wellington, and who, in 1820, gave way to the famous Sir Stratford Canning. The French minister was Hyde de Neuville, a noble specimen of the old *régime*, who in earlier years had shared Moreau's American exile, and whose fascinating wife, we are told, spoke English with such delightful accent that her greeting to her guests, "I am charming to see you," was truer than she knew. Russia was then represented by that witty epicure, Baron Tuyll, and Spain and Portugal by other noblemen of distinguished manners and unusual accomplishments. Generals Brown, Scott, and Macomb were at that period residents of Washington, while the navy was represented by Commodore John Rodgers, for more than twenty years president of the board of naval commissioners, and by Decatur, Perry, Bainbridge, Warrington, Morris, Stewart, Reid, and other heroes, who made their permanent homes at the capital.



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Nor was Washington society in Monroe's time the rude jumble of motley elements to be inferred by the already quoted, somewhat extravagant paragraph from the *National Intelligencer*. "The various drawing-rooms," writes Nathan Sargent, than whom there could be no better authority, "were not then filled to suffocation by a crowd generally unknown to each other and hardly known to the host and the hostess. A large portion of those who constituted society were personal acquaintances; their social intercourse was more frequent, genial, and agreeable, and especially free from that stiff reserve and lack of conversation which must characterize a company made up of those who are unknown to each other or little accustomed to refined society. . . . It was customary to go to parties about eight o'clock and leave from ten to eleven. Dancing was usual, and at every large party tables were set for those who preferred to amuse themselves with whist. There were often several parties thus engaged, for with almost every Southern and Southwestern gentleman of that day play was a passion. They loved its excitement, and they played wherever and whenever they met; not for the purpose of



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winning money from one another, but for the pleasure it gave them. They bet high as a matter of pride and to give interest to the game."

Prominent among those who could usually be seen amusing themselves at cards were Winfield Scott and Stephen Decatur. General Scott, in the early twenties, was as fine a figure of a man as was ever brought forth in America, for nature, framing him in a prodigal mood, had made him the most imposing of all the illustrious soldiers of his century. Washington did not possess so majestic a presence as Scott, who, like his great predecessor, was always, in manner, association, and feeling, the courtly and chivalrous gentleman. Dogmatic and disputatious, however, he certainly was, nor yet without his share of human foibles. It vexed him sorely to be beaten at whist, and he always had an excuse ready for defeat, on one occasion gravely explaining that it was "because I got up to spit."

When Commodore Decatur took up his residence in Washington, soon after Monroe's accession, he was, and with justice, the most widely known and admired officer in the navy. His wife, a beautiful and highly educated



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woman, had been sought in marriage by Jerome Bonaparte, but on the advice of Robert Goodloe Harper, who predicted that Napoleon would never recognize such a union, she refused him, and became the wife of Decatur. The commodore and his lady, building the house which stands, little changed, at the southwest corner of H Street and Jackson Place, at once became leaders in Washington society, but only for a single season.

The conversation at a dinner given by Decatur early in March, 1820, turned on the late war, and he spoke very severely of Captain James Barron for not returning from Europe to bear his part in the struggle. Ill feeling between Decatur and Barron dated back to 1808, when the former was a member of a court-martial to try the latter for surrendering the "Chesapeake" to the "Leopard." Barron was convicted and suspended from rank and pay for five years. He also believed that Decatur's influence had been exerted to keep him on land when he desired active sea-service as a means of restoring his tarnished reputation. He was, therefore, ready to take fire at Decatur's dinner-table talk, when it was reported to him by Cap-



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tain Jesse Duncan Elliott, who also harbored a grievance, real or fancied, against the commodore.

An exchange of angry letters followed, in the last of which Decatur declared that he should pay no further attention to any communication Barron might make to him "other than a direct call to the field." This was supercilious, and left Barron no other course than to challenge Decatur. Captain Morris was asked by Decatur to be his second, but he declined, saying that the duel was entirely needless, and that peace should be made. When Morris, however, offered his services in that interest they were refused, as were also the friendly offices of Commodore Dale; and, preparations for the duel having been made as secretly as possible, the two men, on the morning of March 22, met at Bladensburg. Elliott was the second of Barron and Commodore Bainbridge of Decatur.

"I hope, Decatur," said Barron, while the seconds were loading the pistols, "that when we meet in another world we shall be better friends than we have been in this."

"I have never been your enemy, sir," was Decatur's reply.



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Both fired so nearly together when the word was given that there was but one report, and both fell. Barron was wounded in the hip, where Decatur, who was an unfailing shot, had declared that he should hit him. Decatur's wound was in the abdomen, and was at once seen to be mortal.

"Why did you not come home, Barron, and help us in the war?" asked Decatur as they lay bleeding on the field.

"I had no money and could not," was the reply.

"Why did you not inform me of your situation?" said the dying man. "I would gladly have sent you the money."

Both were placed in carriages after this reconciliation and hurried from the field, Decatur to his home on Lafayette Square, where he died in a few hours. His funeral, three days later, was attended by the President and his Cabinet, the judges of the Supreme Court, almost the whole Congress, and vast numbers of citizens. Public feeling, Monroe and his Cabinet leading it, at first ran high against Barron, who, quite unexpectedly, recovered; but the tide soon turned, and Decatur was very generally con-



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demned as having relentlessly pursued a brave but unfortunate fellow-officer.

Barron long survived the fatal meeting at Bladensburg, and when he died, in 1851, he had been for a dozen years senior officer of the navy. Mrs. Decatur lived in seclusion for some months, but then removed to Kalorama, the fine house built by Joel Barlow, where she lived in great style, giving weekly dinners of the most splendid and costly sort. Her name was freely connected with that of Sir Stratford Canning and with that of the aged Charles Carroll of Carrollton, both of whom greatly admired her. But she did not remarry. Late in life she became a Roman Catholic, and in 1855 she died in the convent at Georgetown.

When the Fifteenth Congress met in December, 1817, with Daniel D. Tompkins, who as governor of New York had played well-nigh as important a part in the second war with England as had been taken by Robert Morris in the Revolution, presiding over the Senate, and Henry Clay, now the most conspicuous man in public life, again serving as Speaker of the House, it contained a round score of newcomers who, ere their race was run, were to



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play a large and forceful part in political affairs. The succeeding Congress was equally pregnant with promise for the future.

Johnson and King, both afterwards Vice-Presidents, had now been promoted from the House to the Senate, where the latter, a wise, prudent, and safe legislator, was to serve until near the close of his life. Massachusetts was represented in the same body by Harrison Gray Otis, and Ohio by Colonel William Trimble, a youthful but battle-tried veteran of 1812. Trimble died at the early age of thirty-five, but his colleague, Benjamin Ruggles, served until 1833, gaining by quiet, fruitful industry the name of the "Wheel-horse of the Senate." One of the Senators from the newly admitted State of Illinois was Jesse B. Thomas, a Western bred and virile descendant of Lord Baltimore, who died long afterwards by his own hand; the other was Ninian Edwards, a transplanted Kentuckian, who at thirty had been chief justice of his native State.

One of Tennessee's seats was held by John Williams, who, as a colonel of regulars, had fought with Jackson against the Creeks and Seminoles. Vermont was worthily represented



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by Isaac Tichenor, a soldier of the Revolution, who had been chief justice and a dozen times governor of his State; Rhode Island by Jonathan Burrill, an eloquent, sagacious man, who, like Tichenor, came to the Senate by way of the judge's bench; and South Carolina by William Smith, stout friend and stouter foe, who at the end of a second term in the Senate removed to Alabama that he might not reside where prevailed the policy of his hated opponent, Calhoun. Burrill, dying in 1820, was succeeded by Nehemiah Riceknight, who, thrice re-elected, served until 1841. Smith, a States'-rights advocate of the strictest sort, accumulated a large fortune by shrewd purchases of public lands, and died a millionaire.

New Jersey's junior Senator was Mahlon Dickerson, who already had a dozen years' public service to his credit, and who remained in the Senate until called to a place in Jackson's Cabinet. Walter Lowrie, an Edinburgh Scotchman reared in Pennsylvania, served a single term as Senator from that State, and then for twelve years held the office of secretary of the Senate. Indiana when admitted to the Union, in 1816, gave one of her seats in the Senate to



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James Noble, who served until his death; and the other to Waller Taylor, who had been an aide-de-camp to Harrison at Tippecanoe and in the war of 1812.

William Pinkney, who took his seat in 1820, was perhaps the ablest representative Maryland has ever had in the Senate,—a striking figure, not less distinguished for his physical beauty and exquisite taste in dress than for his gifts as an advocate and his extraordinary powers as a speaker. Despite frequent absence in Europe, where he had served at different times as minister to England, Russia, and Naples, he had long held a commanding place at the bar of the Supreme Court, and from the day of his entrance into the Senate he was the recognized leader of his party in that body.

Pinkney spoke rarely as a Senator, and then only after laborious and careful preparation. It is related of him, however, that he was always desirous that his speeches should be thought the unstudied inspirations of his genius rather than the result of long and arduous toil. To give the appearance of this he would sometimes resort to the ruse, on the morning of a day that he was to speak in the Senate or the Supreme



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Court, of mounting a horse and riding some miles into the country, returning to enter the Senate or court, whip in hand, booted and spurred, with the appearance of haste, just at the moment he was expected to rise and speak, as if he had failed to remember he was to occupy the floor and had come wholly unprepared, and at once go on with his display of forensic power and beauty fragrant with the oil of the student's lamp.

Pinkney died suddenly and prematurely in 1822; John J. Crittenden, who had preceded him to the Senate, continued a maker and moulder of public opinion for the better part of half a century. Crittenden had barely passed his thirtieth year when, in 1817, Kentucky first chose him Senator. He resigned at the end of three years, but in 1835 came again to the Senate to serve there, save when a member of the Cabinets of Harrison and Fillmore, until the opening of the Civil War. When he died two years later he was a member of the House. Crittenden was a man exceeding wise, fair spoken, and persuading,—so good an authority as Thomas Corwin counted him the ablest debater in the Senate,—and to these qualities he



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added exceptional dignity and charm of manner. He was, with the possible exception of Clay, Kentucky's best-beloved son; and than he none ever served her with wiser, more unselfish purpose, either in House or Senate.

John Holmes entered the House in 1817, and in 1820 was made Senator from Maine, serving in that capacity for a dozen years. Holmes was rude in speech, and at times vulgar, but he had ready wit and a sharp tongue. John Tyler, once seeking to annoy him, asked what had become of the political firm aforetime mentioned in debate by John Randolph as "James Madison, Felix Grundy, John Holmes, and the Devil."

"I will tell the gentleman," said Holmes, springing to his feet, "what has become of that firm. The first member is dead; the second has gone into retirement; the third now addresses you; and the last has gone over to the nullifiers, and is now electioneering among the gentleman's constituents." Tyler did not push his inquiry further.

Other new members who found seats in the House between 1817 and 1821 were the younger William Plumer, of New Hampshire, an accomplished speaker and writer; Walter Folger, of



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Massachusetts, an American Crichton; Timothy Fuller, of the same State, whose memory lives in that of his gifted daughter, Margaret; Benjamin Gorham, long eminent at the Boston bar and one of the last of the Federalists to appear in Congress; bland and astute Louis McLane, of Maryland, who later was to become Senator, member of Jackson's Cabinet, and twice minister to England; Charles F. Mercer, whose Congressional services were to cover a period of twenty-four years; John Floyd, also of Virginia, an irrepressible champion of States'-rights; the venerable Charles Pinckney, of South Carolina, now performing his last public service; George Poindexter, of Mississippi, a man of more than ordinary ability, but much given to controversy and the cup; Thomas Metcalf, of Kentucky, who boasted of his early labors as a mason and delighted to be called the "Old Stone Hammer;" Thomas W. Cobb, of Georgia, an effective debater, who afterwards won a seat in the Senate; Daniel P. Cook, of Illinois, another signally eloquent man; and Solomon Van Rensselaer, Henry R. Storrs, and James Tallmadge, of New York.

Van Rensselaer, who had been a captain of



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foot under Wayne in the Miami campaign and general of volunteers in 1812, left the House near the middle of his second term to become postmaster of Albany, by appointment of Monroe. He was kept in office by Adams and reappointed by Jackson, who, however, soon discovered that the politicians of Albany were running the old postmaster into devious paths. Two solemn delegations appeared in Washington at the same time, and poured into the President's ears their charges that Van Rensselaer amused himself by smoking his clay pipe on the piazza of the only hotel in Albany, and denouncing Jackson and his administration in unmeasured terms. Jackson removed the clay pipe from his own mouth and said,—

"Gentlemen, Solomon Van Rensselaer, when the war of 1812 broke out, was the first man in New York to raise men to fight the enemy, and, damn me, if he didn't lead them himself. He protected your homes and defended the border, and now, by the Eternal! old Van Rensselaer is a brave man, and he has earned the right to cuss me, if he likes, for the rest of his natural life." The Albany post-office saw no change in its head while Jackson remained President.



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Storrs, who served in the House until 1831, was a most capable legislator, quick and ready in debate, of commanding presence, splendid voice, and polished manners; but he did not win so large a place in history as did Tallmadge, whose career in Congress ended with his first term; for it was Tallmadge who, on February 13, 1819, less than a month before he retired from the House, proposed the slavery prohibition amendment to the bill admitting Missouri to the Union, whence resulted a fight which lasted two years, convulsed the country, and made the sectional lines, so long as slavery lasted, deep and permanent in politics.

Tallmadge's proposal that the further introduction of slavery should be prohibited, and that all children born within the State should be free at the age of twenty-five years, met with instant and angry protests from the Southern members. There was abundant reason that it should. Slavery during the preceding twenty years, by the invention of the cotton-gin, had been made more profitable than it ever had been before. The value of slaves had trebled, and the perpetuation of slavery had become for the South a question of the first importance. From it was



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born the necessity, so rapid was the growth of the North in population, for the creation of more slave States, that the existing political equilibrium might be maintained, at least in the Senate.

All Washington thronged to the Capitol to listen to the debate provoked by Tallmadge's amendment. Cobb, of Georgia, boldest in speech of the Southern members, threatened the dissolution of the Union, civil war, and streams of blood should slavery be prohibited in Missouri. Tallmadge and other Northern men declared themselves ready to accept all these calamities rather than permit the spread of slavery to the Territories yet free from it, for Missouri, it will be remembered, had been carved from the Louisiana Purchase, over which Congress had clear jurisdiction. The House, on the third day, adopted the amendment restricting slavery, and thus passed the Missouri bill. It then went to the Senate, which, after a heated debate led by Rufus King for the North and William Pinkney for the South, struck out Tallmadge's amendment, and sent the bill back to the House, where it came to nothing along with other "unfinished business" of the Fifteenth Congress.



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During the summer months there was excited discussion of the question by the press and the people, and when the Sixteenth Congress met in December, 1819, debate upon it was at once resumed, both in the House and in the Senate. The admission of Missouri with slavery was coupled in the latter body with the admission of Maine, on the South's cherished principle that one free and one slave State should always be admitted at the same time. An amendment was moved absolutely prohibiting slavery in Missouri, but it was voted down. Finally, on January 18, 1820, Senator Thomas, of Illinois, proposed that no restriction as to slavery be imposed upon Missouri in framing a State constitution, but that in all the rest of the country ceded by France to the United States north of 36° 30′—the southern boundary-line of Missouri—there should be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude. This was the essence of the famous Missouri Compromise, and, after long and acrimonious debate, and after several more votes in the House for restriction and in the Senate against it, this compromise was adopted.

There the matter rested for the moment, but



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at the next sesion of Congress the whole question was unexpectedly reopened. The bill passed at the preceding session had authorized the people of Missouri to make a State constitution without any restriction as to slavery; but the constitution with which she now presented herself to Congress for formal admission to Statehood not only recognized slavery as existing there, it provided also that it should be the duty of the Legislature to pass such laws as would be necessary to prevent free negroes or mulattoes from coming into or settling in the State. Again there was angry discussion, but with no other result than to leave the real difficulty, from the temper aroused, more difficult than ever of settlement.

Clay, who had lately resigned the Speakership, Taylor, of New York, being chosen his successor, was generally regarded as the only man who could work out a solution of the existing problem. Owing to the pressure of his private affairs he did not appear on the floor of the House until the fourth week of the session, but from the moment of his coming he applied himself with tireless energy to the task in hand. His influence and efforts worked a quick change



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in the temper of Congress, and when, at the fitting moment, he moved a joint committee of both houses, his motion prevailed. The committee was substantially of his own choosing and he was its chairman. Four days later he presented a report which recommended the admission of Missouri practically on the terms of the former compromise, and on the further condition that no law should be passed abridging the right of any citizen to settle in the State. This resolution was adopted on the same day by the House and on the next day by the Senate. The condition was duly complied with, and Missouri became a State.

This adjustment was a signal triumph for Clay, who alone possessed the influence and sagacity required to bring it about. It at once turned the public mind to things of more hopeful interest, and it brought to Congress a man of weight and momentum, for Thomas Hart Benton was elected a Senator from the newly admitted State. Benton, thirty-nine years old when he entered the Senate, was a typical product of Western birth and breeding, and while he grew and broadened in mental stature until the end of his days, he never lost touch with



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the people of his region, who soon came to regard him as their ablest Representative and the most stalwart exponent of the Western policy.

Benton, though a sometimes tedious and always pompous debater, had a strong, tenacious mind tenemented in an eminently sound body, and to quick capacity for the mastery of facts and details he added impressive boldness in their presentation. These qualities made him from the first an important factor in the affairs of the Senate, and, along with unswerving devotion to the principles he had early adopted, won for him, as time went on, a measure of popular esteem and confidence that the more brilliant but vacillating talents of a Clay, a Calhoun, or a Webster could not command.



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# CHAPTER VIII

## AN ERA OF GOOD FEELING

WASHINGTON, when Monroe's second term began, was rounding out its first quarter-century of existence as the capital city. Nathan Sargent, writing of it in 1824, describes it as the most straggling town on the continent. "The buildings, from the navy-yard to Rock Creek," he tells us, "were standing here and there on the Avenue, with wide spaces between, giving rise to the sarcasm that it was a city of magnificent distances, and, as some added, great expectations. For the depth and adhesiveness of its mud in wet weather, and the quantity of its dust in dry, few cities could vie with it; and as for lights, if the pedestrian did not provide and carry his own, he was in danger of discovering every mudhole in his route and sounding its depths. . . . There were a few good houses in the vicinity of the White House, and some on Capitol Hill, especially on North A Street and New Jersey Avenue, South; but, with the exception of these, and some west of



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the White House, the whole eastern, southeastern, and northeastern portions of the city were enclosed fields or common pastures. On the north side of the city, east of Fourteenth, the population had only in a very few instances advanced north of F Street. From the post-office, on E Street, all north was common pasture, except the great number of brick-yards, then making brick for the Capitol. On these common pastures were hundreds of cows, owned by the citizens, every family then having one or more, and no milk being carried around for sale or to supply families. Where the Smithsonian buildings and grounds now are were innumerable quagmires in the fall, spring, and winter. Great numbers of the clerks in the departments and general post-office rode to and from their places of business on horseback. There were extensive stables for the use of these and the horses of members of Congress, many of whom came on horseback from their lodgings,—not a few from Georgetown."

At this period and for many years thereafter the sign of the Indian Queen, later the Metropolitan, "swung and creaked invitingly to arriving travellers, many of whom came on horse-



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back, some with a colored servant on another horse, and a pack-horse besides." Mr. Sargent styles the keeper of the Indian Queen, Jesse B. Brown, "the prince of landlords," and the title appears to have been well earned. Brown, a native of Havre de Grace, had served his apprenticeship at Hagerstown and Alexandria. "A glance at the travellers, as they alighted and were ushered by him into the house, would enable him mentally to assign each one to a room, the advantages of which he would describe ere sending its destined occupant there under the pilotage of a colored servant."

At meal-time Brown, wearing a large white apron, escorted the newly come to seats, "and then went to the head of the table, where he carved and helped the principal dish. The excellence of this he would announce, as he invited those at table to send up their plates for what he knew to be their favorite portions; and he would also call attention to the dishes on other parts of the board, which were carved and served by the guests who sat nearest to them. Brandy and whiskey were placed on the table in decanters, to be drunk by the guests without additional charge. At the bar, toddies were made



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with unadulterated liquor and lump-sugar; the ale came from a brewery on the bank of Rock Creek; fresh mint for juleps was brought from the country every day, and yet the charge was but twelve and a half cents a drink. On high days and holidays Brown would concoct foaming eggnog in a mammoth punch-bowl once owned by Washington, and the guests of the house were all invited to partake. The tavern desk was behind the bar, where the barkeeper prepared the drinks called for, saw that the bells were answered, received and delivered letters and cards, and answered questions by the score. He was supposed to know everybody in Washington, where they resided, and at what hours they could be seen."

Mr. Sargent further relates that when he "next visited Washington, Gadsby had built and occupied his new hotel, which afterwards became the National. This he conducted in a sort of military style, and especially was this observed at his long dinner-table. The guests all seated, and an army of colored servants behind the chairs, with Gadsby, a short, stout gentleman, standing at the head of the table, the word was given, 'Remove covers!' When



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all the servants moved like automata, each at the same moment placing his hand on the handle of a cover, each at the same instant lifting it, stepping back in line and facing to the head of the table, and, at a sign from Gadsby, all marching and keeping regular step to the place of depositing of the covers, and then back, to commence waiting on the guests. Who," Mr. Sargent regretfully asks in conclusion, " of the hundreds of thousands who in those good old cheap times—only a dollar and a quarter a day—enjoyed the hospitalities of this gentlemanly and most liberal Boniface, can forget his urbane manner, his careful attention to his guests, his well-ordered house, his fine old wines, and the princely manner in which he would send his bottle of choice Madeira to some old friend or favored guests at the table?"

When Gadsby's first threw open its doors to the public profound peace and quiet reigned in the political world. " The era of good feeling," the name given to Monroe's second term, perhaps by the President himself, has secured for the whole period of his incumbency a sort of peaceful eminence. The most interesting event of this happy period, when party lines and



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prejudices seemed buried from sight, was the arrival in America of the venerable Lafayette, trusted companion of Washington and firm friend of the republic when it stood most in need of friends. He came on the invitation of the national government, and was tendered a frigate to bring him to the United States. He declined the use of a public ship, however, and taking passage on the "Cadmus," of the Havre line of packets, arrived at Staten Island on Sunday, August 15, 1824, accompanied by his son, the namesake of Washington, and also by his son-in-law.

Lafayette's arrival stirred the whole country; and from widely separated States and cities came urgent invitations for him to visit them. These he accepted, meeting often with old Revolutionary comrades, and being everywhere received with lively manifestations of love and respect. He spent many months in travel, and then, having visited every portion of the country, returned to Washington to become in fact the "Nation's Guest" at the White House. Soon after the meeting of Congress, in December, 1824, a bill, reported by a joint committee, was passed granting to him a township of land and



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the sum of two hundred thousand dollars; and, in his further honor, a banquet was given him by Congress on January 11, 1825, while, in graceful and grateful remembrance of his gallant part in one of the battles of the Revolution, the name of Brandywine was bestowed upon the lately launched frigate which was to carry him back to France.

When on September 7, 1825, Lafayette bade a final farewell to America, the occasion was made a public and imposing one. All business was suspended at Washington, and a distinguished company gathered at the White House to take leave of the departing guest. When all was in readiness, the President addressed him in language signally eloquent and touching, and so moving and pathetic was Lafayette's reply that there were few tearless eyes among the men and women there present. Immediately after this scene Lafayette left the White House and the city, and proceeded down the Potomac to its mouth, where the "Brandywine" awaited his coming, and on board of which he left America never to return.

Washington, in 1824, had another guest worthy of remembrance. This was Pushma-



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taha, the "eagle of the Choctaws," described by Andrew Jackson, his old comrade in arms, as the greatest and best Indian he had ever known. When Tecumseh sought, in 1813, to induce the Creeks, Cherokees, and Choctaws to become a part of his projected confederation against the whites, Pushmataha, the principal chief of his tribe, announced his loyalty to the United States, and with five hundred braves took the field, serving under Jackson through all the perils of the Pensacola campaign, and proudly carrying during the remainder of his life the scars received in more than a score of battles. Later, with his tribe, he settled in Arkansas, and in 1824, at the head of a delegation of representative Choctaws, journeyed to Washington "to brighten the chain of peace between the Americans and the Choctaws." Their errand, expressed in less flowery language than that of their leader, was to bring about the removal of a large number of white men living on their land and to prevent further settlement.

The concessions requested by the Indians were granted, but their leader did not live to sign the treaty they had come to negotiate. On the evening of December 23 Pushmataha paid a



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visit to Lafayette. Immediately after his return to his lodgings he was stricken with diphtheria, and twenty-four hours later he had ceased to live. "When I am dead let the big guns be fired over me," was his last request. Pushmataha's grave was made in the Congressional Cemetery, fully two thousand persons attending his funeral, and before leaving Washington his brother chiefs chose a monument to mark the resting-place of their leader. It is of sandstone, once white, but now dark with age,—a rectangular block, resting on a pedestal and surmounted by a pyramid. On one of its sides appear these words from a eulogy pronounced upon him by John Randolph of Roanoke:

"Pushmataha was a warrior of great distinction. He was wise in counsel, eloquent in an extraordinary degree, and, on all occasions and under all circumstances, the white man's friend."

Another conspicuous figure in Washington at this period was Gabriel Richard, the only Catholic priest ever elected to Congress, and the only member of the House who ever came direct from a prison cell to a seat on the floor. A native of France, Father Richard received



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orders in Paris, and in 1798 came to this country. He was for a time professor of mathematics in St. Mary's College, Maryland, but afterwards labored as a missionary in Illinois, finally locating at Detroit, Michigan. While pastor of St. Ann's Church in that city he began the publication of a Catholic paper. It became his duty as a pastor to excommunicate a parishioner who had been divorced from his wife, and this act, together with articles published in his paper, caused him to be prosecuted for defamation of character. A heavy fine or imprisonment for a long period was imposed, and being poor himself and a majority of his parishioners French settlers of small means, he was compelled to go to prison, where he remained until elected a delegate in Congress from the Territory of Michigan. A man of great learning, he served with distinction in the House, delivering several exceptionally able speeches on important issues.

A full score of strong men found seats in the House while Father Richard was a member of that body. James Buchanan entered Congress from Pennsylvania in 1820, beginning at thirty a career which was to see him a member both of the House and Senate, minister to Russia



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and England, and President. Massachusetts sent Henry W. Dwight, a veteran of 1812 and "a noble specimen of a sound mind in a sound body." New York was now represented in part by Churchill C. Cambreling, one of the best-informed legislators of his time; by Dudley Marvin, a lawyer and debater of exceptional capacity; and by Reuben H. Walworth, afterwards chancellor of his State. Bluff Duncan MacArthur, of Ohio, had been a general of volunteers in the war of 1812 and later was to become governor of his State. Conspicuous also in the Ohio delegation were Joseph Vance, a true son of the West, who first as a Democrat and afterwards as a Whig served for sixteen years in the House, and John C. Wright, a writer and speaker of no mean ability,—fluent, caustic, and sarcastic.

William S. Archer, fourteen years a member of the House and for six years more a Senator from Virginia,—serving in each branch as head of its Committee on Foreign Relations,—was a man of genuine parts and a trusted friend of Clay. Virginia furnished two other able debaters in John Strode Barbour, five times a member from the Culpeper district, and in



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William C. Rives, neighbor of Madison and close student of public affairs, who was successively Representative, minister to France, and Senator. Another new member from Virginia was Andrew Stevenson, Speaker from 1827 to 1834 and minister to England under Jackson. Willie P. Mangum, of North Carolina, began, in 1823, the long career which, first in the House and afterwards in the Senate, was to give him place among the undisputed leaders of the Whig party, many of whose members at one time regarded him as an available candidate for the Presidency. One of Mangum's associates was Romulus M. Saunders, an adroit politician, who in the Democratic national convention of 1848 wrought the undoing of Martin Van Buren.

Willis Alston was again a member from South Carolina, which also sent James Hamilton, a fiery advocate of States'-rights, and George McDuffie, an austere, grim-visaged man, who as a debater had few equals in the House. Both Hamilton and McDuffie were afterwards governor of their State, and enacted leading parts in the drama of nullification. John Speed Smith, of Kentucky, had served under Harrison at Tippecanoe, and had been his aide in the battle



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of the Thames. Kentucky sent another veteran of 1812 in Charles A. Wickliffe, whose aristocratic bearing had early won for him the name of "the Duke," but who long served his State and country in many honorable stations. John Forsyth was again a member of the House from Georgia, and Edward Livingston represented the New Orleans district of Louisiana.

Several of the men who at this time gained seats in the Senate hold a permanent place in history. Littleton W. Tazewell was now a Senator from Virginia, and Pennsylvania had advanced Samuel D. Ingham from the House to the Senate. Samuel L. Southard represented New Jersey. David Barton, forceful but eccentric, was Missouri's junior Senator, and from North Carolina came John Branch, who had been governor of his State, and later was to become Jackson's Secretary of the Navy. Horatio Seymour, son of an eminent soldier of the Revolution and himself a lawyer and jurist of note, was a Senator from Vermont.

Robert Y. Hayne in 1823 came to the Senate from South Carolina. He was then only thirty-two years of age, but had already won repute as an orator, and at once took an active and



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leading part in debate. Gifted with exceptional charm of manner, Hayne painted his own portrait when he once said of Webster that he "had never heard him utter a word in a careless or vulgar style; that he never seemed to forget his own dignity or be unmindful of the character and feelings of others." A close and logical reasoner, whose style always kept pace with the elevation of his theme, Hayne never descended to sophistry or took unfair advantage of an adversary. No man was more warmly loved by his fellow-Senators, and his death at the early age of forty-eight was a loss keenly felt far beyond the borders of his own State.

Martin Van Buren in 1821 entered the Senate from New York. He was then thirty-nine years old, but had been for a dozen years or more one of the political masters of his State. "Within two weeks," said Rufus King, "Van Buren will become perfectly acquainted with the views and feelings of every member of the Senate, but no man will know his." This prediction was verified, and Van Buren soon became a directing spirit in Senatorial affairs, although no one was ever able to quote his views. Taking Aaron Burr as his political model, like Burr he made



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attitude and deportment a study, and when, on leaving the Senate, his household furniture was sold at auction, it was noticed that the carpet before a large looking-glass in his library was worn threadbare. It was there that he had rehearsed his speeches.

Andrew Jackson was also a member of the Senate during Monroe's second term. His voice was rarely heard in debate, but he was a conspicuous figure in all public and social gatherings, and Washington had pleasing cause to long remember the ball which Mr. and Mrs. John Quincy Adams gave in his honor on January 8, 1824. President Monroe was one of the guests at this ball, and he and Secretary Adams were somewhat criticised for their plain attire, which, along with that of General Jackson himself, was in striking contrast to the elaborate costumes worn by many of those present. No description of this brilliant assemblage, which included all the celebrities of Washington and its environs, as well as large numbers from Baltimore and Richmond, would be complete without the lines in honor of the occasion which appeared on the preceding morning in the *National Intelligencer:*



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Wend you with the world to-night?
  Brown and fair and wise and witty,
Eyes that float in seas of light,
  Laughing mouths and dimples pretty.
Belles and matrons, maids and madams,
All are gone to Mrs. Adams'.

. . . . . .

Wend you with the world to-night?
  Juno in her court presides,
Mirth and melody invite,
  Fashion points and pleasure guides!
Haste away, then, seize the hour,
Shun the thorn and pluck the flower,—
Youth, in all its spring-time blooming,
Age the guise of youth assuming,
Wit through all its circles beaming,
Glittering wealth and beauty gleaming,
Belles and matrons, maids and madams,
All are gone to Mrs. Adams'.

The writer of the foregoing lines was John T. Agg, a gifted Englishman who for some years edited the *National Journal,* a daily newspaper devoted to the political fortunes of John C. Calhoun. Journalism by this time had become a recognized and important feature of capital life. The founding of the *National Intelligencer* has been noted in an earlier chapter. When Samuel Harrison Smith, the first proprietor, gave over its control to his young assistant, Joseph Gales,



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the latter associated with himself his kinsman, William W. Seaton. This was in 1810, and until 1820 Gales and Seaton were the exclusive reporters of Congress, one taking charge of the proceedings in the Senate and the other in the House. Seaton, moreover, was a writer of originality and force, and under his direction the *Intelligencer* speedily became, and for many years remained, one of the most influential newspapers of the country.

Washington's corps of correspondents, however, has been from the earliest period the city's distinctive contribution to journalism. One of the first of these to attract attention was James Cheetham, an Englishman of marked personality, who for a dozen years edited the New York *Citizen*. He resided in Washington during the sessions of Congress and wrote letters for his paper, which, from his intimacy with Jefferson, came soon to have the force of official utterance.

Other Washington correspondents of note during the opening years of the century were James Duane, who, as the editor of the Philadelphia *Aurora,* appeared most often to write with a pen charged with vitriol; Matthew L. Davis, the truculent friend of Aaron Burr, who



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wrote for the New York *Courier and Enquirer* under the pen-name of "the Spy in Washington;" Joseph T. Buckingham, whose spirited and sarcastic letters to the Boston *Courier* rarely failed to raise a storm in the Capitol; Jonathan Elliott, an English soldier of fortune who had fought under Bolivar for the independence of New Grenada; Peter Force, founder of the *National Journal* and stout defender of John Quincy Adams; Colonel Samuel L. Knapp, who passed several winters at the capital as the representative of the Boston *Galaxy;* Lund Washington, a distant relative of the first President; Nathaniel Carter, of the New York *Statesman;* Daniel L. Child, of the Boston *Advertiser;* and Richard Houghton, afterwards editor of the Boston *Atlas.* The first person to establish himself permanently as a professional correspondent at the capital was Elias Kingman, a native of Rhode Island and graduate from Brown University, who in 1822 took up his residence in Washington, where for nearly forty years he wrote for the New York *Commercial Advertiser* and *Journal of Commerce,* the Charleston *Courier,* the Baltimore *Sun,* and the New Orleans *Picayune.* James Brooks, of the Portland *Ad-*



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*vertiser,* who has been styled the father of Washington correspondence, did not write his first letter from the capital until 1832.

Knapp, Kingman, and the rest found fruitful subjects for their pens in the events which culminated in the Presidential contest of 1824. The approach of the election in that year found four candidates before the people. These were Jackson, Crawford, Adams, and Clay. The candidacy of Clay had been in assiduous preparation ever since his return from Europe ten years before, with a matured resolve to become Monroe's successor. That, according to precedent, he might stand next in line of promotion, Clay had desired to be Secretary of State in Monroe's Cabinet; and when this post was given to Adams, who thus became the Administration candidate for the Presidential succession, he at once made war on Monroe and his advisers. His speeches in the House denounced as insincere Monroe's constitutional objections to internal improvements, a policy of which Clay had early made himself the champion, and he also savagely assailed the President's failure to give prompt recognition to Spain's revolted colonies in Central and South America.



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Both assaults failed of their purpose; nor did success attend Clay's next parliamentary battle with the Administration, excuse for which was found in Jackson's operations in the Seminole War. Some of Jackson's acts had exceeded his instructions and violated international law, yet so great was the popularity of the "Hero of New Orleans" that the Administration did not venture to censure him. Not so with Clay, who, when Congress met in December, 1818, proposed condemnatory resolutions in the House and warmly supported them in debate. In the minds of the people, however, Jackson had done the right thing, even if in the wrong way. Clay's resolutions were decisively rejected, and his attacks upon Jackson proved the most far-reaching and calamitous of his political mistakes. The fateful feud between these two masterful personalities dated from their delivery. "Jackson," says Parton, "never hated any one so bitterly as he hated Henry Clay."

Clay's repeated defeats in his warfare with the Monroe Administration told heavily against him, but his part in the Missouri Compromise, and in the framing and enactment of the tariff of 1824,—a bill more thoroughly and system-



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atically protective than any ever before reported to Congress,—did much to restore his peculiar and remarkable prestige. Not enough, however, to make him Monroe's successor. None of the four candidates for the Presidency in 1824 secured a majority of the Electoral College. The election was thus devolved upon the House, with choice to be made from the three candidates—Jackson, Adams, and Crawford—who had received the most electoral votes, ninety-nine, eighty-four, and forty-one, respectively. This debarred Clay, who had received but thirty-seven electoral votes.

Had Clay been one of the three highest candidates, his popularity in the House, of which he was again and for the last time Speaker, would have secured his election. As it was, his preference would determine the result. Under ordinary circumstances he undoubtedly would have supported Crawford, but the latter had recently suffered a shock of paralysis so severe as to shatter his health. This disablement was scarcely a greater misfortune to Crawford than it proved to be to Clay, who was thus forced, as he expressed it, to make a choice of evils,—Jackson or Adams. Without delay



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he announced to his friends that he had decided to support Adams.

Clay's determination no sooner became known, however, than some of Jackson's friends attempted to drive him from it. The weapon used for this purpose recalls one of the most discreditable incidents in American politics. A few days before the time set for the election in the House a letter appeared in a Philadelphia newspaper asserting that Clay had agreed to support Adams upon condition that Clay be made Secretary of State. The same terms, the letter alleged, had been offered to Jackson's friends, but none of them would "descend to such mean barter and sale." The letter was anonymous, but purported to be written by a member of the House. Clay at once published a card in which he pronounced the writer "a dastard and a liar," who, if he dared avow his name, would forthwith be called to the field.

Two days later the letter was acknowledged by a witless member from Pennsylvania, Kremer by name, who asserted that the statements he had made were true, and that he was ready to prove them. A duel with such a character was out of the question. Something, however, had



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to be done, and Clay immediately demanded an investigation by a special committee of the House. Such a committee was duly elected. None of its seven members had supported Clay for the Presidency. Kremer promptly declared his willingness to meet the inquiry; but in the end the committee reported that he had declined to appear before it, sending instead a communication in which he denied the constitutional power of the House to compel him to testify. No further official action was taken, and in this shape the matter, for the time being, rested.

The election of a President by the House took place on February 9, 1825, in the presence of the Senate. Adams, supported by his own and the friends of Clay, was elected on the first ballot.



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# CHAPTER IX

## THE YOUNGER ADAMS

IMPOSING ceremonies marked the inauguration on March 4, 1825, of John Quincy Adams as sixth President of the United States, for, in deference to what were considered to be the desires of the President-elect, officials and citizens vied with each other in adding elaborate features to the affair. Adams was attended to and from the Capitol by marines, the military, and citizens, but changed the programme of his predecessors by delivering his inaugural address before taking the oath of office. After the latter event he received the congratulations of his friends, and then went to his room and made up the list of Cabinet officers to be sent to the Senate.

The new President, a squat, square-jawed, florid-faced man of fifty-eight, had been more than forty years in the public service when he took up his residence in the White House. A more interesting and distinctive personality never dwelt therein. A man of stainless purity,



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honorable, patriotic, and independent to a fault, the younger Adams was guided at every turn of his long career by an elevated morality and a rigid political honesty as rare as they were admirable. This is the bright side of the picture; the reverse reveals a man dogmatic, rancorous, vindictive, and bitterly censorious, who, having no sympathy with and eliciting none from the public men with whom he was brought in contact, was suspicious, uncharitable, and unjust in his judgments of them, and unable to act in concert with them for the general welfare.

The course Adams pursued while President demonstrated his honesty and independence, and that he was entirely without political art. Minutely faithful to his official duties, he not only examined the details of the executive business as it was transacted in the several bureaus and departments, but passed many of his evenings mechanically signing patents and land warrants. His annual and special messages to Congress displayed immense information and profound reflection; but many of his recommendations were without practical value, and fell still-born from his pen. He sought, moreover, to conciliate his



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opponents by attempting in his inaugural message to ignore party lines, and from first to last his appointments were made without regard to the political opinions of the appointees. The result of this policy was speedily apparent: it won him no new friends and it alienated his old ones. Before the close of his first year in office he found himself, as his father had before him, a President without a party.

The furniture of the White House had fallen into sorry state when Adams became President. When Congress voted a modest sum to furbish and replenish it, the President took personal charge of the work, and one of his first acts was to buy the silver plate of Mr. Crawford. This was savagely criticised by the opposition press, as was the purchase of a billiard-table for the White House, and the plain people were made to believe that the President was living at their expense in a style of regal splendor. Never was a man more falsely accused. The truth is that Mr. Adams lived in great simplicity, based upon the economical spirit that controlled every action of his life.

It was his custom while President to rise between four and six o'clock, according to the



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season, and either take a ride on horseback or walk to the Potomac, where he bathed, remaining in the water for an hour or more in summer. Returning to the White House, he read two chapters of Scott's Bible and the corresponding commentary of Hewlett, and then glanced over the morning papers and the budgets sent from the departments. He breakfasted at nine, and from ten until four he remained in the executive office, presiding over Cabinet meetings, receiving visitors, or considering questions of state. Then, after a long walk, or a short ride on horseback, he would sit down to dine at half-past five, and after dinner resume his public duties, laboring habitually until far into the night.

Adams's diary affords many diverting proofs of his simple and democratic habits. On one occasion he imperiled his life by attempting to cross the Potomac in a small boat, accompanied by his son John and by his steward, Antoine Giusta. Intending to swim back, they had taken off nearly all of their clothes, which were in the boat. When about half-way across, a gust of wind capsized the boat and forced its occupants to abandon it and swim for their lives to the



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Virginia shore. Antoine, by taking what garments each one had on, managed to clothe himself decently, and started across the bridge to Washington, while the President and his son swam in the river or walked to and fro on the shore. The steward reappeared at the end of the second hour with clothing and a carriage, in which they returned to Washington. Adams that day purchased a watch to replace the one Antoine had lost in the boat, and he alluded to the adventure that night in his diary as "a humiliating lesson, and a solemn warning not to trifle with danger."

Adams's private secretary while President was his son John, a graduate from Harvard, who had inherited many of his father's peculiarities, and who on several occasions found himself with an ugly quarrel on his hands. A Washington editor, Russell Jarvis by name, angered at some remark John Adams had made at a White House levee, once challenged him to a duel, and when the challenge was declined, attempted to assault him in the rotunda of the Capitol, but was prevented from so doing by a by-stander. The President made the occurrence the subject of a special message to Congress, and the House



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appointed a committee of investigation, which made an elaborate report, but did not recommend that any punishment be inflicted upon Jarvis. John Adams was married, while his father occupied the White House, to his cousin, Miss Mary Hellen, and it is related that the President, usually so grave and unsocial, unbent for the nonce, and danced at the wedding ball in a Virginia reel with great spirit.

Louisa Catherine Johnson, the wife of the President,—her portrait painted by Leslie shows a woman of grace, culture, and distinction,—was born, educated, and married in London when her father, brother of the first Republican governor of Maryland, was American consul there. As bride and wife she shared her husband's honors as Senator, minister, and Secretary of State. Mistress of all the arts of society, her entertainments in the White House were events of memorable import in the social world. She not only kept up the evening levees instituted by Mrs. Madison and continued by Mrs. Monroe, but improved the quality of the refreshments, which were handed around on waiters by servants. State dinners were also given during the session of Congress, to which



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were invited such Senators and Representatives as had called at the White House to pay their respects. Sectional rancor or the spite of party had no place at Mrs. Adams's teas and receptions, and she improved every opportunity for making the Administration of her husband popular.

The Washington drawing-rooms during the social reign of Mrs. Adams housed no more brilliant figure than the daughter of General John Adair, a stately Kentucky beauty who had married Joseph M. White, then delegate in Congress from Florida. Visiting Europe in after-years, she was received in the highest circles, and a characteristic story is told of her attendance at a fancy ball given by one of the members of the Bonaparte family. On receiving the invitation, she called on her hostess and asked what she should wear. "An American costume, of course," was the reply. "We have no original American costumes," said Mrs. White; "we follow your fashions." "But," answered the princess, "you are a Kentuckian, and surely you have Indians in Kentucky." Mrs. White accepted the hint, and appeared at the ball as an Indian girl, gay with beads and feathers, a



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quiver at her back and a bow in her hand. Her tall and graceful figure never showed to greater advantage, and she was ever afterwards known in Paris as "la belle sauvage."

Ireland at this period contributed to the society of the capital the widow and son of Theobald Wolf Tone, the ill-starred founder of the United Irishmen. Eagerly greeted also at the fashionable gatherings of Adams's time were Francis Scott Key, pensive singer of piety and patriotism, already famous as the author of the "Star-Spangled Banner;" John Pendleton Kennedy, a literary cavalier in the best sense of the term, whose "Swallow Barn" and "Horseshoe Robinson" still find readers, and Robert Trimble, jurist, wit, and man of the world, who, in 1826, was given the seat on the bench of the Supreme Court which he held until his death.

Another conspicuous personality of the social period under review was Benjamin Ogle Tayloe, second son of Colonel William Tayloe. A graduate from Harvard and later a student in the law-office of Richard Rush, the younger Tayloe, when, in 1824, he married Julia Maria Dickenson, of Troy, New York, intended to pursue the life of a country gentleman on his Virginia



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estate. This life, however, was not so congenial to his wife as to himself. She desired a town house, and accordingly he built and occupied the spacious residence, now 21 Madison Place, Lafayette Square. This house, until its owner's death in 1868, was the scene of a generous yet discriminating hospitality. Remaining steadfastly in private life, against many solicitations to accept office, its master nevertheless exerted a powerful influence in national affairs, and was the intimate and trusted friend of half a dozen Presidents. Few men have better understood the bearing of the social relations on political questions, or employed it more skilfully in the service of their friends.

Residents of the capital in the late '20s had at their command few amusements in the restricted sense of the word. One of these was horse-racing, while the Washington Theatre, first opened to the public in August, 1821, was occasionally occupied by a company of actors from Philadelphia, who journeyed every winter as far south as Savannah, performing in the intermediate towns on the way. President Adams first made acquaintance with the elder Booth when that tragedian accompanied one of



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these dramatic expeditions as its chief attraction. On another occasion he saw Edwin Forrest, then a youth without repute or influence, and enjoyed the finished acting of Thomas Cooper as Charles Surface in the "School for Scandal." In shrewd contrast with these rare nights at the play, Washington was also favored once a year with a discourse, usually in the open air, by the famous itinerant preacher, Lorenzo Dow, whose style of impassioned oratory was as singular as the matter of his sermons and his personal appearance. Tall and well formed, with pale and emaciated features emphasized by hair and beard of inky blackness, he always spoke with great earnestness, and counted his converts by thousands. Dow, who is said to have preached to more persons than any man of his time, died in Georgetown in 1834.

"Half-breed Indian preacher" was the nickname given to one Eleazer Williams, an occasional sojourner in Washington during the Adams Administration, who afterwards won notoriety as the Lost Prince of the House of Bourbon. A Seneca Indian with a dash of white blood in his veins, Williams had been carefully educated, and later as a missionary



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had preached with eloquence and persuasive power to the red men of the Northwest. His appearance at the capital was in the doubtful rôle of a lobbyist seeking the ratification of a treaty under which the Senecas then resident in New York were to be removed to the West. This task he had undertaken, it was said, at the instance of certain speculators who wanted the New York lands vacated and who paid him well for his services. One who met Williams at this time described him as "a man who might have sat for the head upon a louis-d'or, of large frame and swarthy complexion, and of the lift of head and heavily moulded face that marked the Bourbons." It was not until a much later period, however, that he put forth his claim to be the lost Dauphin of France, a claim vigorously scouted at the time, and since emphatically rejected as one of the fables of history.

President Adams in forming his Cabinet gathered about him men of first-rate ability. James Barbour was made Secretary of War, but upon his appointment as minister to England in June, 1828, was succeeded by General Peter B. Porter. The Treasury portfolio was given to Richard Rush, son of Washington's surgeon-



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general, who had already performed distinguished service as a Cabinet officer and as minister to England. Samuel L. Southard was retained as Secretary of the Navy and William Wirt as Attorney-General, while John McLean continued to fill the office of Postmaster-General, not then a Cabinet post, during the whole of Adams's term. Henry Clay, who had been made Secretary of State, was, of course, the most important member of the Cabinet. Clay's services as a Cabinet minister were always effective and often brilliant, especially on the social side, his intercourse with foreign ministers affording abundant opportunity for the display of all the charms of his unequalled courtesy. His Wednesday dinners and his pleasant evening receptions were remembered for many years.

John W. Taylor, of New York, succeeded Clay as Speaker of the House, but at the end of a single term gave way to Andrew Stevenson, of Virginia, who held the chair until 1834. One of the ablest of the new members of the House in the Nineteenth Congress was Tristam Burges, a Rhode Island lawyer, whose fame had preceded him to Washington, and whose sarcastic wit and constant readiness for battle



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quickly proved him an antagonist to be feared and avoided. John Randolph, the Ishmael of the House, who up to that time had found no one able or willing to cope with him, met his equal in the bent, white-haired New Englander. In one of their many encounters Burges, after likening Randolph to some hideous monster, exclaimed, "But, thank God, Mr. Speaker, monsters cannot perpetuate their species!" alluding to the generally accepted belief that Randolph could never be a father. "The gentleman," was Randolph's retort, "makes a boast of his virility: he boasts of that in which the goat is his equal and the jackass his superior."

Burges served eight years in the House. John Davis, a legislator of marked independence and breadth of vision, was during the same period a member from Massachusetts. Edward Everett, noted alike for learning and for eloquence, was also, from 1825 until 1835, a member of the Massachusetts delegation. New York sent General Aaron Ward, a soldier turned lawyer, and Silas Wright, who claimed to be a good farmer but no orator, yet who soon became noted for the compactness and force of his logic. Pennsylvania returned Charles Jared



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Ingersoll, caustic and self-confident as of old, and Richard Henry Wilde, now at the meridian of his powers, once more held a place in the Georgia delegation.

One of the new members from Virginia was George C. Washington, a collateral descendant of the first President. Two other bearers of historic names entered the House with Washington,—Ambrose H. Sevier, nephew of the Tennessee pioneer and State-builder, and Chittenden Lyon, son of doughty Matthew Lyon. Sevier, a man of undoubted parts, served in the House until 1836, and then for a dozen years was a Senator from his adopted State,—Arkansas. The younger Lyon inherited the impetuous temper and ready wit of his father, and was, besides, a man of gigantic stature, strength, and prowess, qualities which caused him to be both loved and feared by the people of the Kentucky border, who four times elected him to represent them in the House. Edward Bates, of Missouri, then a young man of thirty-four, sat in the Twentieth Congress as an anti-Democrat. He declined re-election, but in a later and very different era was to return to Washington to become Attorney-General in Lincoln's Cabinet.



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The Twentieth Congress also included three new members from Tennessee, each of whom was destined to win a permanent place in history. One of these was James K. Polk, a keen, austere Puritan of the South, who thus entered upon the part in national affairs which was to lead him through the Speakership to the Presidency. With Polk came John Bell, still under thirty, but already eminent as a lawyer, who, in the course of a long and luminous public career, was to become Speaker of the House, Cabinet minister, Senator, and finally, in the evening of his days, leader of a forlorn hope in the Presidential contest of 1860. David Crockett, typical backwoodsman and Indian fighter, completed a noteworthy trio. This singular man, first elected to the House in 1825, served three terms in that body, where, though uncouth and eccentric in manner, his native shrewdness and common sense gave him uncommon influence.

At the same time Crockett's unfailing wit and good nature won him instant popularity with his fellows, who often sought to make him a butt for their jokes, but always to their sorrow. He was sitting one day in the office of



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the Indian Queen Hotel. Near him stood a member of the House from Massachusetts looking out at the street. Suddenly he called out, "Oh, Crockett, here comes some of your constituents." The colonel—he had held command of a militia regiment in Tennessee—walked to the door and saw before him a drove of mules ambling down the street. "Where are they going?" asked the member from New England. "They are going to Massachusetts to teach school," replied Crockett, without changing the expression of his face, and then quietly resumed his seat. When the influence of Jackson, whom he had first supported and then opposed, made it impossible for Crockett to be again elected to Congress, he joined the Texans in their struggle for independence, and, having performed various heroic exploits, put the seal of martyrdom on his adventurous life in the famous defence of the Alamo, where, as one of the six survivors of a band of seven-score Texans, he surrendered to Santa Anna, only to be massacred by that officer's orders.

The opening of the Nineteenth Congress found John C. Calhoun presiding officer of the Senate. The preceding year he had put aside



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a long-cherished Presidential ambition in favor of Jackson. He had secured by so doing his own election as Vice-President by a large majority, and with this honor a promise from the friends of Jackson that when their hero had won and held the Presidency Calhoun should be his successor. By instinct and by education a parliamentary leader, Calhoun must have found it most irksome to be forced to dumbly listen to debates in which he was eager to participate; yet his Vice-Presidency marks a decisive epoch in his intellectual development. The station, from its leisure, gave him abundant opportunity for study, and it was at this time that he laid the foundations of the school of political philosophy with which his name is identified.

John M. Berrien, a native of New Jersey, upon whom Georgia, his adopted State, had early showered high honors, took, in 1825, a seat in the Senate, where his clear and impressive oratory won for him the title of the "American Cicero." Kentucky sent John Rowan, who, like Berrien, had already performed eminent services as a lawyer and jurist. Powhatan Ellis, another judge and advocate of more than local repute, was now a Senator from Mississippi. In-



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diana had promoted William Hendricks from the House to the Senate, and Pennsylvania supplied a unique Senatorial figure in William Markle, a wilderness-bred tanner, whose quiet industry left an abiding mark on the legislation of his time. A more considerable figure than any of the group just mentioned was alert and self-contained Levi Woodbury, whose single term as a Senator from New Hampshire was to win him the title, conferred by Benton, of "the rock of the New England Democracy," and with it a place in Jackson's Cabinet.

General Jackson having been formally renominated for the Presidency by the Tennessee Legislature in the fall of 1825, resigned from the Senate. The seat left vacant was taken by Hugh L. White, an exceptional man, who, after having fought with Sevier against the Cherokees, had studied law in a log cabin, becoming at the age of twenty-eight a justice of the Supreme Court of Tennessee. Judge White was fifty-two years old when he entered the Senate, and he served there fifteen years. Seldom has the Senate chamber held a more winning or striking figure. Tall and slender, his strong and thoughtful face was crowned by a shock of snowy hair



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which even in middle life gave him the dignity and serenity of old age. And the outer spoke the inner man. Endowed with extraordinary mental power, a learned lawyer and a ripe and profound scholar, he was also upright and sincere, "as sternly honest as Cato, as scrupulously just as Aristides." Thus, as a Senator, he from the first took and held a place in the front rank. No man ever left the Senate—irreconcilable differences with his old friend Jackson finally compelled his resignation—followed by a more general and affectionate regret. Judge White died five months after he retired from public life.

Daniel Webster was advanced from the House to the Senate in 1827, and in the same year John Tyler was returned to the latter body from Virginia, succeeding John Randolph, who had been appointed two years before to fill a vacancy. Randolph's course in the Senate duplicated his previous performance in the House, one of his speeches involving him in a duel with Henry Clay.

Randolph's attack on the Secretary of State and the duel which followed it, however, were only minor incidents in a contest for the Presidency which may be said to have extended over



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Adams's entire term. It will be remembered that Clay had exerted a decisive influence on the election of Adams, and that the charge had then been made by friends of Jackson that his support was the result of a corrupt bargain by which he was to be made Secretary of State. Clay's prompt and, as he thought, conclusive denial of this charge has also been referred to; and it is now on all hands acknowledged that the only attempt at bargain had been made by Jackson's friends, although without the general's knowledge. Still, it was natural that the rank and file of Jackson's following should regard Clay's subsequent appointment as conclusive proof that such a deal had been made. By accepting it he made himself the victim of circumstantial evidence. It is true that for several days he hesitated to accept the place, and finally assumed its duties with reluctance. What chiefly determined him was the belief that if he did not accept, it would be argued that he dared not. To a man of Clay's make-up the prospect of such an accusation was more obnoxious than the other horn of the dilemma. He, therefore, took the alternative of bold defiance. But in so doing he committed another



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calamitous political error, and one which, as after-events proved, forever barred him from the Presidency.

A strong effort was made at the moment to reject Clay's nomination, fifteen Senators voting against him. This attempt failing, the cry of "bargain and corruption" was raised with renewed vigor, and without delay a strong party, which had Calhoun, Benton, Van Buren, Randolph, and McDuffie for its master-spirits, was formed in Congress to oppose the Adams Administration and all its measures. The opposition opened its batteries early in the first session of the Nineteenth Congress upon the proposition, warmly advocated by Clay and approved by Adams, to send ministers to a congress which the Spanish-American republics had arranged to meet at Panama. This congress, if ruled by wise counsels, promised to bear lasting and beneficent fruit and to give practical effect to the Monroe doctrine, but it was politically necessary for the adversaries of Adams and Clay to find some excuse for attack, and this was the first that offered. Nomination of the envoys was at length confirmed, but only after a delay which frustrated the whole



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project. The lengthy debate in the Senate rendered it impossible for the delegates from the United States to reach the isthmus in time for the congress. When they arrived it had adjourned to meet at a later time in Mexico; but when that time came dissensions among the Southern members rendered the congress impracticable.

Randolph had counted Clay as an enemy, and when the discussion in the Senate of the Panama mission opened the way he gave full vent to his unrivalled power of invective, uttering in one of his outbursts a sentence that remains among the most famous ever spoken in Congress. "I was," said he, "defeated, horse, foot, and dragoons,—cut up and clean broke down by a coalition of Blifil and Black George, —by a combination unheard of till then, of the Puritan with the blackleg." Further, he virtually charged Clay with the forgery of a despatch which purported to have been written and addressed to him by a foreign minister, and in closing he berated Clay's parents for bringing into the world "this being so brilliant yet so corrupt, which, like a rotten mackerel by moonlight, shines and stinks."



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This flagrant diatribe was soon the talk of the capital. Randolph refused to explain his language, and Clay forthwith challenged him to a duel. The meeting took place on the banks of the Potomac, April 8, 1826. At the first exchange of shots Clay's ball cut Randolph's coat near the hip and Randolph's went wild. Another was demanded by Clay. Randolph received the fire of his antagonist, raised his pistol and fired in the air, saying, "I do not fire at you, Mr. Clay." Then, in an affecting scene, the men became friends. "The joy of all," says Benton, who was present, "was extreme at this happy termination of a most critical affair. It was about the last high-toned duel I have witnessed, and among the highest-toned I have ever witnessed." It was Clay's last experience as a duellist.

The war waged against Adams became more acrimonious as time went on, the opposition to his Administration growing constantly in strength. Nor, much as he desired a second term at the hands of the people, would he do ought to obtain it. He would not make removals from office save for breach of duty, and he even refused to disturb officials who had



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indecently reviled him. This lost him many supporters. His seeming want of appreciation for personal service lost him more. Cold and acrid in temperament, he granted favors ungraciously, while his refusal was like a blow in the face: no one receiving it forgot or forgave. He was, in a word, the most complete obverse of the popular politician.

There being, moreover, no important policy or principle in controversy, the sole issue of the contest of 1828 was Adams or Jackson. With the personal note dominant, the campaign was the most scandalous in American politics. To further the interest of their candidate the Jackson men established the *United States Telegraph* in Washington, and installed as its editor General Duff Green, of Missouri. A more fit and capable man for the services required could not have been found. Green had an extensive knowledge of public men and measures, and he wielded a vigorous and trenchant pen. Everything that rancorous partisan invention could concoct found a place in the columns of the *Telegraph* and was spread broadcast by other Jackson journals. The charge of "bargain and corruption" was printed, placarded,



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and harped upon throughout the land, and with it travelled a swarm of congenial aspersions against the habits and character of the President and his Secretary of State.

Jackson, although he won a signal triumph, receiving one hundred and seventy-eight electoral votes to eighty-three cast for Adams, did not escape this pestilence of slander. The Administration press, in Washington and elsewhere, teemed with charges of the most infamous character against him. Even his wife, a plain and inoffensive woman, was not exempt from attack, and soon after the election died of grief. Jackson could not forgive the men who had hastened her death. He regarded Adams as one of these, and on his arrival in Washington to take office declined to pay the customary visit of respect to the President. Stung by this neglect, Adams resolved not to appear at the inauguration of his successor. When Jackson was being inaugurated, amid shouts of the assembled thousands, Adams was taking his usual solitary ride on horseback, and it was the artillery salute, fired when the President had taken the oath of office, that told him that he was again a private citizen.



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## CHAPTER X

### THE REIGN OF JACKSON

WASHINGTON had never held such throngs as flocked there to witness the inauguration of Andrew Jackson on March 4, 1829. "I never saw such a crowd before," Webster wrote from the capital in the closing days of February. "Persons have come five hundred miles to see General Jackson, and they really seem to think that the country is rescued from some dreadful danger." They surged through the streets shouting "Hurrah for Jackson," and they swarmed about Gadsby's, where the general lodged, in such masses as to completely hem it in and make access to his presence nearly impossible. Ten thousand people gathered on inauguration day about the east portico of the Capitol, which was to be used for the first time for these ceremonies; a ship's cable had to be stretched across the long flight of steps to keep back the army of eager sight-seers, and it was only with difficulty that the procession which escorted the



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general—a band of Revolutionary veterans formed the body-guard—was able to reach the Capitol.

The President-elect on his arrival there went first to the Senate, where the chief justice and other dignitaries joined him to proceed to the out-door platform. When he appeared on the portico the shout which arose seemed to shake the very ground. The ceremony ended, the general mounted his horse to proceed to the White House, and the whole crowd followed him, its members striving who should first gain admittance into the Executive Mansion. An abundance of food and drink had been provided, including many barrels of orange-punch; and as the waiters opened the doors to bring out the punch, the crowd rushed upon them, upsetting the pails and breaking the glasses.

The crush inside the house was so great that distribution of refreshments was impossible, and tubs of punch were set out in the grounds to entice people from the rooms. Jackson himself was so pressed against the wall of the reception-room that he could be protected from injury only by a number of his friends, who linked arms and formed a living barrier about him.



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Men with boots heavy with mud stood on the chairs and sofas in their eagerness to get a view of the hero. Justice Story wrote that the crowd contained all sorts of people, from the highest and most polished down to the most vulgar and gross in the nation. "I never saw such a mixture," he added. "The reign of King Mob seemed triumphant."

Von Holst, anxious, perhaps, to coin a telling phrase, characterizes the Presidency thus inaugurated as "the reign of Andrew Jackson." Though the label is a misleading one, some excuse for it is found in the portraits of Jackson. These show a figure tall, spare, erect, and commanding, with features worn and seamed, but fixed and strong; steady, deep-set, piercing eyes shadowed by shaggy brows, and lips which, save in his kindlier moods, had always a firm and defiant expression, a shock of bristling white hair lending an appropriate crown to a bearing and individuality no stranger could meet without startling recognition. Yet no eminent American has been more persistently and wilfully misunderstood by a majority of his countrymen. The frontier lawyer, planter, and soldier, who dwelt during the greater part of his



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life in comparative obscurity, was, nevertheless, one of those masterful figures who appear in high places only once or twice in a century.

Endowed with a strong if narrow mind, and signally free from cant and pretension, Jackson understood men thoroughly, and in practical sagacity and keenness of perception was unsurpassed among his contemporaries. These qualities, with the ability to seek and accept sound advice, were the prime elements of his superiority,—a superiority which becomes more manifest with the years. He was, moreover, to all but his declared enemies sincerely cordial and winning, warm in his attachments, considerate in his bearing to those around him, seldom impatient of contradiction, and never forgetful of what was due to others. No better-mannered man has ever filled the Presidential chair.

Clay and Webster, their advisers and adherents, however, saw in Jackson's elevation to the Presidency an absurd and outrageous precedent. They looked upon him as an unlettered soldier, wholly unfitted for civic duties, and his election as contrary to the best traditions of the republic, and pregnant with calamity. They were also



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blind to the newly awakened force which lay behind Jackson's rise to the Presidency. This was the progress of the democratic sentiment, —the desire of the masses to exert their power, which, ever since Jefferson's time, had been steadily gaining force and momentum, and which was sure, sooner or later, to gather about some personage who aroused popular admiration. Jackson was such a personage, and his mission in the popular mind was to infuse the democratic spirit into the administration of the government. The prevailing idea of Jackson was that he was "of and for the people," and such was its potency and power that it enabled him during eight stormy years to cope with and triumph over an opposition unparalleled in the history of the republic.

The social atmosphere of Washington was quickly and radically affected by the levelling forces which found expression in Jackson's election; and wine and high play forced their way, without delay, into retreats consecrated to sobriety, good manners, discreet deportment, and edifying discourse. Francis Preston Blair, in a letter written in the winter of 1831, describes a typical fashionable gathering of the period.



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"The hospitable host," says he, "commonly invites the whole city, and those who can't get in go away, and as fast as the company gets sick of being wedged in phalanx, and are unable to extricate themselves and retreat, the house is thinned, until a servant is enabled to pass through the rabble with a waiter of trumpery over his head. This is refreshment something like that of Tantalus. It is the tyranny of Caligula, who set his laws so high that nobody could read them. So fashion puts its good things out of reach. At these parties they sometimes try to dance, but it puts me in mind of a Kentucky fight, when the crowd draws the circle so close that the combatants have no room to use their limbs. They have, however, four-and-twenty fiddlers all in a row, trying by the dint of loud music to put amateurs in motion. They jump up and down in a hole and nobody sees more of them than their heads."

At this time everybody, including the servants, flocked to the levees and Cabinet receptions, and the story is told of a cartman who left his vehicle in the street and entered the White House in frock and overalls to shake hands with the President. An incident of this



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sort might have easily occurred, for Jackson was as democratic in his tastes and habits as in his principles. Without reverence for rank or estate, he gauged men according to their capacity, and recognized merit in the humblest station. No President has made himself so familiar with the condition and wants of the people of Washington, and before the close of his first year in office he knew more of the interior affairs of the several departments and the men employed therein than did any member of his Cabinet. The welfare of the most poorly paid clerks he made his own, and while he took care that they were not imposed upon by their superiors, he compelled them to fulfil their engagements under all circumstances when instances of misconduct were brought to his knowledge. The son of an old friend of the general held a clerkship in the Land Office. He fell in arrears to his landlady, and she complained to the President, who sent at once for the clerk. "How is this, Lund?" said he, in greeting. "Mrs. Beale says you owe her for board." "It is true, general; I am a little behind with her," was the reply. "She wants the money. Why don't you pay her?" demanded the President. "I intend to



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soon; but my family has been sick, and, my salary being small, I have been unable to meet her bills regularly. I will pay her as soon as I can." "But the woman needs it, and you must pay her at once." "I should be glad to, but I cannot." "You shall," said the general, "and I'll lend you the money," handing him the amount.

Andrew Jackson Donelson, Jackson's foster-son and namesake, served as his private secretary during the general's eight years in the White House, and played an important part in the politics of the period. Parton tells how Jackson jotted down on the margin of newspapers, or upon scraps of paper, the ideas which were to control his messages, and these he carried in his hat. Pulling the fragments from this capacious magazine, they were handed to Donelson for amplification into good and orderly English. It was to Donelson that Jackson left the gold-mounted sword which had been a present from the citizens of New Orleans, and it was all that the old hero could leave him, as he says in his will his debts forbid a better legacy, but the words of the testament bequeathing the sword ring with this patriotic sentiment:



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" Use it when necessary in support and protection of our glorious Union, and for the protection of the constitutional rights of our beloved country, should they be assailed by foreign enemies or domestic traitors."

General Jackson's wife, as before stated, died before he entered the White House. Mrs. Donelson, wife of his private secretary, presided at the Executive Mansion during his two terms. The " lovely Emily," as she was called, brought youth and beauty to her task, and discharged it with grace and intelligence. The President loved her with the love of a father, and once only did she oppose his wishes. That was in what was known as " the Eaton affair." When the President asked Mrs. Donelson to call upon Mrs. Eaton, and thus give that lady public recognition, the favorite niece flatly refused. " Then you must go back to Tennessee, my dear," said the general. " Very well, uncle, I will go back," was the decided reply. And so she and her husband were exiled from the White House, only, however, to be soon recalled and to occupy their old positions until the close of the Jacksonian period. Four children were born to Mrs. Donelson at the White House. One of the four,



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Mrs. Mary Emily Donelson Wilcox, still resides in Washington.

"The Eaton affair," to which reference has just been made, holds a curious place in the history of the Jacksonian epoch. Jackson's Cabinet, as at first constituted, included Martin Van Buren as Secretary of State; Samuel D. Ingham, of Pennsylvania, as Secretary of the Treasury; John Branch, of North Carolina, as Secretary of the Navy; John M. Berrien, of Georgia, as Attorney-General, and William T. Barry, of Kentucky, as Postmaster-General. The post of Secretary of War was given to John H. Eaton, a life-long friend of the President and previously for ten years a Senator from Tennessee. Eaton's name, while he was thus employed, had been often unfavorably coupled with that of Margaret Timberlake, *née* Peggy O'Neil. This lady, the spoiled daughter of an Irish inn-keeper, had married before she was seventeen a young purser in the navy. The husband died by suicide at Port Mahon, in 1828, and presently the widow became Mrs. Eaton. Under these circumstances the wives of the Vice-President and the Cabinet officers refused her social recognition. Jackson, however,



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smarting under the recollection of the cruel manner in which his own wife had been assailed in the Presidential canvass, at once championed Mrs. Eaton's cause, and had her a frequent and honored guest at the White House. Then he essayed to discipline his refractory Cabinet. Van Buren and Barry, who were widowers, lent themselves to the President's wishes, and the former, joining forces with the ministers of Great Britain and Russia, entertained the "princess of discord at suppers, dinners, and balls. Her audacity on these occasions was as brilliant as her beauty was bewildering. Staid matrons of the Cabinet and Congressional set called untimely for their carriages, clergymen denounced her publicly, and Peggy, dancing for joy, ran daily to Jackson with fresh stories of delightful insult." Meanwhile, the three married men of the Cabinet refused to speak to Eaton, except as official business absolutely required, and in the presence of the President.

The end of this tempest in a teapot was not long in coming. Van Buren and Eaton tendered their resignations, and were appointed, the one minister to England and the other



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governor of Florida, while those members of the Cabinet whose sensitive consorts shrank from calling on the wife of the Secretary of War were bluntly informed that an entire reorganization would take place, and that their resignations would be accepted. They were accordingly tendered, and Ingham, Branch, and Berrien retired to private life, the first named never again to leave it. The cause of Ingham's undoing, however, had still before her a long and singular career. Eaton, after a short sojourn in Florida, was sent as minister to Spain, and his wife enjoyed at Madrid several of the happiest years of her life. Then they returned to Washington, where after a time the husband died, leaving his wife a comfortable fortune. The twice-widowed woman, at the age of sixty-three, married a man of less than twenty-one, an Italian music teacher, who soon eloped with her money and her granddaughter. She survived even this youth after divorcing him, and died, in 1879, at the age of eighty-three. Ever amiable and vivacious, her last words were, "I am not afraid, but this is such a beautiful world."

The new Cabinet constructed by Jackson, fol-



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lowing the retirement of Van Buren and his colleagues, consisted of Edward Livingston, of Louisiana, Secretary of State; Louis McLane, of Delaware, Secretary of the Treasury; Lewis Cass, of Michigan, Secretary of War; Levi Woodbury, of New Hampshire, Secretary of the Navy, and Roger B. Taney, of Maryland, Attorney-General; while in 1835 Amos Kendall, of Kentucky, succeeded Barry as Postmaster-General. Each of these gentlemen, with one or two exceptions, was superior to his predecessor, and the Cabinet, as a whole, was a very able one. However, in Jackson's hands this body had already been shorn of much of its former dignity. Cabinet officers were no longer the "constitutional advisers" of the President; few Cabinet councils were held, and the several heads of departments resembled military staff-officers.

Jackson's actual advisers were confined to a small coterie of friends, who, with one exception, were not members of the Cabinet. These advisers during the first years were William B. Lewis, Amos Kendall, and Isaac Hill, and they constituted the so-called "kitchen cabinet," a term which soon became as familiar to the peo-



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ple as a household word. Lewis, long the friend and neighbor of Jackson and now second auditor of the treasury, was an adroit and far-seeing politician,—Sumner calls him "the great father of wire-pullers,"—wholly devoted to the cause of his chief. Kendall was a native of Massachusetts, who had been a tutor in the family of Henry Clay and later editor of the Frankfort (Kentucky) *Argus*. He early became a warm supporter of Jackson, who in 1829 made him fourth auditor of the treasury and subsequently head of the Post-Office Department. Secretive yet audacious in his political methods, he was also a powerful and ready writer, and many of Jackson's ablest state papers were attributed to his pen. Hill, who had been for many years editor of the Concord *Patriot,* and who from 1830 until 1836 was a Senator from New Hampshire, wielded a pen as forceful as Kendall's, and was Lewis's equal in shrewdness and sagacity.

A fourth member of Jackson's "kitchen cabinet" as at first constituted was Duff Green, editor of the *United States Telegraph*. Green, however, because of his devotion to Calhoun, was soon replaced by Francis P. Blair, who had



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been Kendall's partner in the publication of the Frankfort *Argus,* and who established the *Globe,* in which Jackson's official acts were stoutly defended and merciless warfare waged against those who opposed them. Blair, though a clever writer and politician, was a physical Caliban. The story was long current in Washington of how a wager was once made between certain Georgians and Kentuckians of an oyster-supper for thirty, to be paid for by the citizens of that State which could produce the ugliest man. The evening came, the company assembled, and Georgia presented a fellow who, though not naturally ill-favored, had the ability to wonderfully distort his features. The Kentuckians were in despair, for their man, who had been in training for a week, was so hopelessly drunk that he could not stand. But at the last moment a happy thought occurred to one of them. Ordering a hack, he drove to the *Globe* office, and soon returned with Blair as an invited guest, saying, as they entered the room, "Gentlemen, this is Mr. Blair, the editor of the *Globe,* and if he will only look as nature made him Kentucky wins." The Georgians at once declared their willingness to pay for the supper.



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The first feature that marked Jackson's Administration was the sweeping enforcement of the doctrine, originally enunciated by William L. Marcy, that "to the victors belong the spoils." Those who had supported the President demanded that their labors should be rewarded, and Jackson, keenly alive to the persistent and ferocious abuse with which he had been assailed, was in no way reluctant to grant their demands. In this, as in all he did, he proceeded with vigor and celerity. During the first years of his Presidency he made as many removals for political reasons as had been effected, mostly for cause, by all of his predecessors. In one direction, however, he stayed his hand; he would not consent to have officials who had served their country in the field removed on any pretence.

General James Miller, one of the heroes of Lundy's Lane, was collector of the port of Salem. When the name of a successor to Miller was sent to the Senate, Benton, confident that the nomination had been made under a misapprehension, requested that it might be laid on the table. Then, at once proceeding to the White House, he laid the matter before the President. "Do you know, sir, who is collector



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of the port of Salem?" was Benton's opening query. "I don't remember his name, but he is a good Democrat whom I appointed on the recommendation of our Boston friends," said Jackson. "But do you know who is to be removed to make room for him?" queried Benton. "Some Hartford Convention Federalist, I suppose," was the reply. "General Miller has been collector of the port of Salem for many years past," said Benton. "What! not the hero who fought so bravely in the late war?" exclaimed the President. "Yes, sir; the gallant soldier who said 'I'll try' when asked if he could carry the enemy's position." Jackson at once flew into a passion. "Confound these politicians!" said he. "Is nothing sacred from their rapacity? I'll send up and withdraw the nomination at once. Here, Donelson, write to Miller in my name. No, I will write myself." The letter which Jackson wrote recited the circumstances under which a man had been named to succeed Miller, and assured the general that he should retain the office as long as he lived. And he did.

Jackson's policy of wholesale removals from office was greeted with fierce denunciations and



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direful prophecy on the part of the opposition press, and in Congress it was made the subject of protracted and excited debate. Among those who engaged in this and kindred discussions in the House were a full score of new members whose names are still well remembered, including Rufus Choate, of Massachusetts; George Evans, of Maine; and Thomas Corwin, of Ohio. Choate, though still a young man, had already done much to win a place among great forensic advocates when he entered the House, and in that body he was at once recognized as an orator of the first rank. He resigned in 1834, before the end of his second term, but Evans, who had preceded him by two years, served in the House until 1841. After that he for six years represented his State in the Senate, and in both bodies he exerted a commanding influence. Evans, whom Webster, doubtless with a mental reservation in favor of himself, once pronounced the ablest lawyer in New England, and rare skill as a dialectician, and as a debater was seldom, if ever, overmatched. Always a fluent speaker, when excited he piled up arguments, accusations, and epithets with overwhelming force, and those who once



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felt the sting of his tongue seldom invited a second encounter.

A very different man was Corwin, who served in the House from 1831 until 1840. Perhaps the first genuine humorist to find a seat in Congress, Corwin, at every stage of his career, made a business of searching out the jocularities of current issues and using them to lighten the seriousness of statesmanship. His speeches surprised and delighted Congress and the country, and quickly gave him a national reputation. Humor, however, was not his only gift. He possessed also a poetic sense, which he had cultivated by a diligent study of the best English poets; and he knew how to temper that sense so that it would appeal to the throng. Thus it was that his speeches, based on solid political truth, were also illustrated by wit, by anecdote, and by imagery rich yet simple, such as the layman could understand. Corwin was unexcelled as a stump orator while he lived, and his superior has not appeared since his death. The people of Ohio, his adopted State, were at his feet, and there was no office in their gift that they did not bestow upon him. They took him from the House to make him governor,



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and later he served as Senator, Secretary of the Treasury, and minister to Mexico. His last years, however, were shadowed by the belief that his career had been handicapped by his reputation as a wit and humorist. "My dear Garfield," said he to the future President just before his death, "be solemn, solemn as an ass. All the monuments in the world are built to solemn asses."

Richard M. Johnson was again from 1829 until 1837 a member of the House from Kentucky, and another district of that State was represented during Jackson's two terms by Thomas Chilton, a whilom Baptist preacher of imposing stature and lung-power. Alabama also supplied a physical giant in Dixon H. Lewis, a man of enormous size and weight, who had furniture made for his special use, and who, when he travelled, was always compelled to engage two seats in railway and other public conveyances. Chilton had little save size and voice to commend him to notice, but Lewis was a man of sound parts, who after eleven years in the House won a seat in the Senate, where he sat until his death. Cave Johnson, afterwards Postmaster-General under Polk, was a member of



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the House from Tennessee, and places in the Maryland delegation were held by Francis Thomas, subsequently governor of his State, and by Benjamin C. Howard, best remembered in these days for his services as reporter of the Supreme Court, while from New York came Samuel Beardsley and Ambrose Spencer, the one a vehement supporter of Jackson and the other a devoted follower of Clay. Spencer had been chief justice of his State, and Beardsley, after he left Congress, held the same office for many years.

Mention, however, has still to be made of the most notable member of the House during the Jacksonian epoch. This was the venerable John Quincy Adams, who, tiring of the rural quiet of Quincy, returned to Washington in 1831 as Representative from that district. Prompt and regular in his attendance at committee meetings and the sessions of the House, the ex-President's intimate and profound acquaintance with the political history of the country, and wonderful ability for resolving a subject into its original elements, gave him great power in debate, and, coupled with unbounded audacity and an unequalled gift for sarcasm and ridicule, made



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him a dreaded adversary. Adams's place was unquestioned from the day that he entered the House, and he remained until his death its most conspicuous and striking figure.

Never before nor since has the Senate held so much ability and oratorical talent as distinguished it between 1829 and 1833. Its membership, when Jackson took office, included a score of men whose eloquence and sagacity assured them permanent fame, and to their number was added, during the next two years, learned and masterful William L. Marcy, of New York; rugged and resolute Thomas Ewing, of Ohio; bland and scholarly George M. Dallas, of Pennsylvania; urbane and eloquent John M. Clayton, of Delaware; truculent and aggressive George M. Troup, of Georgia, who had performed previous service both in the House and Senate; John Forsyth, of the same State; Felix Grundy, of Tennessee; Willie P. Mangum, of North Carolina; George Poindexter, of Mississippi; and William C. Rives, of Virginia. To give added strength to this exceptional group, Clay returned in 1831 to the scene of his first triumphs, and a year later Calhoun took the seat which had been vacated for him by



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Robert Y. Hayne. Not, however, until Hayne had borne a leading part in what was, in some respects, the greatest debate in the history of the Senate.

Congress in 1828 had passed a tariff act which embodied the first extreme application of the protective system in federal legislation. That act, popularly known as the "tariff of abominations," was approved by the industrial North. The agricultural South, however, anxious to buy in the cheapest market, bitterly opposed it, and outlet for its wrath was afforded when, in December, 1829, Foote, of Connecticut, presented to the Senate a resolution calling for an inquiry into the expediency of limiting the sale and suspending the survey of the public lands. Debate on the resolution was opened by Benton, who, with other Western Senators, saw in it a tendency to check the growth of their section, and it continued several weeks with increasing bitterness.

Belief in the hostility of New England towards the West found ardent advocates in many Southern Senators, who wished to unite the South and West in opposition to the tariff, and on January 19, 1830, Hayne made a bitter



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attack on Massachusetts and her sister States, accusing them of seeking by their protective policy to enrich themselves at the expense of the rest of the Union. Webster replied to this speech on the following day, answering Hayne's accusations with great power. This retort provoked a long and able reply from Hayne, who, with eloquence, sarcasm, and invective, assailed Webster, Massachusetts, and New England, and the principles for which they stood. Then changing his tone, the orator entered into an exposition of the doctrine which, framed and fathered by Calhoun, was then beginning to fill a large share of public attention,—that of nullification. He argued with boldness and ingenuity that as South Carolina had originally, through her State convention, legally called, consented to be governed by the act of Congress, she could now, through her State convention called in like manner, refuse to assent to any act of Congress that she might deem unconstitutional or inimical to her interest, thus "nullifying" them and rendering them inoperative so far as she was concerned. The apotheosis of States'-rights, this doctrine, carried to its logical conclusion, turned the Constitution into



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a rope of sand, and, in view of the agitation against the tariff of 1828 then going on in South Carolina, called for instant and absolute refutation. Otherwise, nothing was more certain than that it would speedily and inevitably destroy the Union.

Man and the hour met in Webster, then in the third year of his senatorship and the flush of his powers as an orator. Debate on Foote's resolution had now lasted so long that people had come from different parts of the country to hear it, and when on January 26 Webster arose to again reply to Hayne,—the latter had finished his two days' speech on the preceding afternoon,—the crowd not only filled the galleries and invaded the floor of the Senate chamber, but occupied all the lobbies and entries within hearing and even beyond. Webster had made no special preparation for what was to prove his master-effort, but all his life he had been making ready for such an occasion, and, from his opening sentence to the lofty outburst of eloquence with which he closed, his elocution, to quote the words of a listener, " was the steady flow of molten gold."

Webster first replied to Hayne's aspersions



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upon himself and New England, his noble depiction of the part the latter had played in history moving many of his listeners to tears; and then he attacked with weighty argument and keen-edged sarcasm the doctrine of nullification. Nothing could be more masterly than his demonstration that nullification meant revolution, and the soundness of his argument was amply illustrated when, a generation later, the crisis came which he deprecated with so much intensity of emotion in his concluding sentences. A new era dated from the delivery of this speech. Giving clear expression to and offering full justification for the growing sentiment of loyalty to the Union, it is safe to say that no other address ever made in Congress has found so many readers or so profoundly influenced national sentiment.

One of those who read and were influenced by it when it first came from the printer was Jackson. A native of South Carolina, the advocates of nullification had counted on him as an ally, but Webster's unanswerable arguments, enforced by Van Buren's sage advice, soon convinced him that the doctrine taught by Calhoun and his followers could but prove



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destructive to the Union. With Jackson to think was to act, and when the champions of nullification, in order to strengthen their cause, organized a public dinner on the anniversary of Jefferson's birthday, April 13, 1830, the President attended and gave as a toast, "The federal Union,—it must and shall be maintained." Thus the imperious old soldier met the nullifiers face to face, and gave them to understand what they might expect from him. "With nullification," said he to a friend, "the Union is like a bag of meal open at both ends. Pick it up in any fashion and it all runs out. I will tie the bag and save the country." Less than two years later he fulfilled this promise in a manner that proved that every pulse in his frame beat in sympathy with the national idea.



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# CHAPTER XI

## BATTLES BETWEEN GIANTS

THE rising tide of democracy which carried Jackson into the Presidency was the signal also for a new and aggressive arrangement of political forces. The President's followers took the name of Democrats. Those who opposed him were known first as National Republicans, and after 1834 as Whigs. Clay, who led in the work of forming the opposition party, designed, as its head, to contest the field with Jackson in 1832, and in pursuance of this plan he was, in December, 1831, formally nominated by a national convention held in Baltimore. The same month, it having become evident that Congress was to be the scene of a fierce and protracted struggle, Clay returned to his old seat in the Senate, and from that time forward commanded in person the fight against Jackson and his party.

Jackson's policy had by this time become distinctly outlined. The President was opposed to internal improvements, special legislation of



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every sort, and a renewal of the charter of the Bank of the United States, which was to expire in 1836. He was also known, the public debt being nearly paid, to favor a material reduction of the tariff. The President's attitude on these questions gave Clay the opportunity he most desired, and he at once resolved to procure the recharter of the bank and to perpetuate protection. Accordingly, on January 9, 1832, he submitted to the Senate a resolution outlining his plan of tariff revision. This proposed the abolition of all duties on articles not competing with domestic productions, save duties on wines and silks, which were to be reduced, and the maintenance of existing or increased duties on other articles. The Committee on Finance was to report a bill on that basis. The same day the memorial of the bank for the renewal of its charter was presented, this preliminary to the introduction of a bill for that purpose.

Discussion of these subjects, however, was not begun until the Senate carried out a minor detail of the Clay programme,—the rejection of Van Buren's nomination as minister to England. Clay was aided and abetted in this by Calhoun, who, when Jackson took office, had



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stood foremost among the supporters of the new President. In fact, when Jackson was elected it was understood that he should serve a single term, and that Calhoun, who in 1828 had been again chosen Vice-President, almost without opposition, should become his successor. This plan, however, went early awry. Mrs. Calhoun's refusal to give social recognition to Mrs. Eaton brought her husband into disfavor with Jackson, and soon a circumstance hitherto concealed came to light to widen the breach. William H. Crawford had not ceased to resent his defeat in 1824, for which, with or without due reason, he held Calhoun chiefly responsible. From the comfortable retirement afforded him by a seat on the Georgia bench Crawford wrote to one of Jackson's friends, declaring that in Monroe's Cabinet, of which he and Calhoun had been members, the latter had proposed that Jackson's conduct in the Florida War be made the subject of inquiry, and that, if the charges against him were proved, he be punished with severity. Crawford's letter brought him the revenge he was seeking. William B. Lewis showed it to Jackson, who at once enclosed a copy to Cal-



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houn, with a request for an explanation. There could be none, however, and the President's cooling friendship for Calhoun changed on the instant to implacable enmity. The latter was doomed from that day as Jackson's successor.

Calhoun charged his loss of favor to Van Buren, who profited by, if he had not fostered, the quarrel with Jackson, and when Clay, intent upon the political undoing of a possible rival for the Presidency, undertook to defeat Van Buren's nomination as minister to England, joined earnestly and eagerly in the effort. Van Buren was savagely attacked, a dozen speeches being made against his confirmation, and the nomination finally rejected, by Calhoun's own casting vote, with a result, perhaps, unforeseen except by one astute Senator, who, when Clay and Calhoun openly rejoiced over their work, said to them, "True, you have broken a minister, but you have elected a Vice-President."

This shrewd prophecy had quick confirmation. Van Buren, returning from England, where he had been received with marked attention, was warmly welcomed at the White House as a victim to the opposition to the President,



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and it soon became known that Jackson, now firmly resolved upon a second term, had determined to make Van Buren his successor in the Presidency. Formal proof of this was furnished when a Democratic national convention held at Baltimore in May, 1832, nominated Jackson for President and Van Buren for Vice-President. Thenceforward Van Buren stood beside his chief, the latter's most trusted and, as results clearly proved, most sagacious adviser.

Clay, meanwhile, had carried through the programme with which he had entered the Senate,—not, however, without resolute opposition from the supporters of the President, and at the price of concessions which soon bore bitter and calamitous fruit. Two days after the introduction of his tariff resolution he addressed the Senate in its support. It was six years since he had been heard in Congress by the public,—Van Buren's nomination had been debated behind closed doors,—and this fact, coupled with his reputation as an orator, and popular desire to see and hear a man who filled so large a place in the public eye, served to throng both floor and galleries. Nor did Clay



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disappoint his hearers. His speech, admirable in spirit and manner, opposed a rapid reduction of the public debt, urged the maintenance of the policy of protection, and closed with a solemn declaration that he acted "in a spirit of warm attachment to all parts of our beloved country, with a lively solicitude to preserve and restore its harmony, and with a firm determination to pour oil and balm into existing wounds rather than to further lacerate them."

Clay's hopes were ill-founded. The South, already embittered by the tariff of 1828, saw in his plan of revision not oil and balm for existing wounds, but the threat of more irksome burdens, and its representatives at once resolved upon resistance. Hayne, of South Carolina, again came forward as the champion of his section, and submitted an amendment to Clay's resolution proposing an immediate reduction of the import revenue to an amount sufficient to defray the expenses of the government after paying the public debt, and the gradual adoption of a general average of duties. He supported his proposition in a speech of great ability, in which he cogently presented the views of the South; examined the character



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of the protective system, denouncing it as unconstitutional, unjust, and oppressive, and closed with a spirited defence of free trade. The profound impression produced by Hayne impelled Clay to reply in a speech which occupied two days in its delivery and holds a permanent place in the literature of protection. The debate thus opened was continued for many weeks in both branches of Congress, almost every prominent Senator and Representative sharing in it. Clay's resolution was adopted in the end, and a bill modelled on the plan it proposed became a law; but, as presently will appear, it was to prove a two-edged sword.

The Whig leader, however, was not seriously disturbed by the opposition to his tariff bill, for it was upon his party's advocacy of the recharter of the Bank of the United States that he mainly relied to assure Jackson's undoing and his own election to the Presidency. Small space can here be given to a controversy the adequate story of which would fill volumes. No one now disputes the fact that the bank, under the presidency of Nicholas Biddle, concentrated in itself an enormous power. It is also known, this by confession of its directors, that it spent



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in four years many thousand dollars in what they called "self-defence" against "politicians." Those who opposed it denounced it "as an institution too great and powerful to be tolerated in a government of free and equal laws;" because "its tendencies were dangerous and pernicious to the government and the people," and because of "the exclusive privileges and anti-republican monopoly it gave to the stockholders."

Jackson, whose prejudice against a national bank was of long standing, announced in his first message to Congress his hostility to the renewal of the charter, which, it will be remembered, had several years to run. He returned to the attack in his two following messages. The directors of the bank and their friends, alarmed at his attitude, resolved upon immediate action. Backed by the Whig leaders, they presented to Congress the memorial already referred to, and subsequently a bill was reported to renew the charter of the bank for a term of fifteen years from its expiration. The bill was debated for many weeks and aroused intense feeling. The bank's chief champions were Clay and Webster. The Democrats, led



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by Benton, resolutely opposed the bill, but were unable to prevent its passage, and on July 4, 1832, it was sent to the President.

Six days later Jackson returned it to Congress with a veto message which revealed all the arts of the consummate politician. The President favored a bank, but not this bank. The monopoly bestowed by the original charter operated, he argued, as a gratuity of many millions by greatly increasing the value of the stock. The renewal would still further improve the stock to fifty per centum above its par value, rendering the market value of the monopoly seventeen million dollars. "It appears," ran the message, "that more than one-fourth of the stock is held by foreigners and the residue by a few hundreds of our citizens, chiefly of the richest class. For their benefit does this act exclude the whole American people from competition in the purchase of this monopoly, and dispose of it for many millions less than it is worth. . . . If our government must sell monopolies, it would seem to be its duty to take nothing less than their full value; and if gratuities must be made once in fifteen or twenty years, let them not be bestowed on



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the subjects of a foreign government nor upon a designated and favored class of men in our own country."

An attempt to pass the bill over Jackson's veto failed of the requisite two-thirds majority, and on July 16 Congress adjourned. The Presidential campaign was begun. In this contest the slanders of 1828 were renewed and re-enforced. Both parties resorted to personal vilification; and the epithets and imputations with which Jackson was assailed were not less scurrilous and unfounded than those heaped upon Clay. Indeed, Jackson seems to have got the worst of it in this respect, for the great majority of the newspapers were Whigs and their columns were continually filled with all that partisan ingenuity could invent. One popular Whig picture represented the President receiving a crown from Van Buren and a sceptre from the devil. Another showed him raving at a delegation. Still another presented Clay and Jackson in the guise of jockies riding a race towards the White House, Clay a length ahead.

Events failed to confirm this forecast. Clay's tariff policy was hateful to the South, and his



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bank policy lost him supporters all over the country. Jackson's triumph was, therefore, overwhelming, Clay receiving but forty-nine out of two hundred and eighty-six electoral votes. Nor did Clay's humiliation end here, for Van Buren was elected to the Vice-Presidency by nearly the same vote received by Jackson. The rejection of his nomination for minister to England had produced an effect precisely opposite to that intended. Clay, always a hopeful man, did not lose heart in the face of the utter defeat he had sustained, and a few weeks later returned to his seat in the Senate, ready to continue his leadership of the Whigs.

Jackson, on the other hand, interpreted his overwhelming victory as a popular endorsement of all his actions as President. The enthusiastic applause from all quarters which greeted his next important official act served to still further strengthen his belief in himself as a "saviour of society" and "champion of the people." Reference has already been made to the doctrine of nullification formulated by Calhoun and his followers. So rapidly had it matured to action that in November, 1832, a State convention in South Carolina passed an



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ordinance nullifying the tariff laws of 1828 and 1832, and prohibiting the payment of any dues under them in the State after February 1, 1833. Jackson at once took up the gauntlet of defiance thus thrown down. He sent General Scott to take command at Charleston, with troops near by and gunboats at hand, and a few days later issued a masterly proclamation, written by Livingston, which pronounced the act of South Carolina contradictory to the Constitution, and unauthorized by and destructive of its aims. The governor of South Carolina answered this with a counter-proclamation.

The people of the North hailed the President's stand with patriotic fervor, while several of the Southern States formally declared against the doctrine of nullification. South Carolina, however, gave no sign of receding from its position. Calhoun, meantime, resigned the Vice-Presidency and took the seat in the Senate made vacant by the resignation of Hayne, who had become governor of South Carolina. Thus the State's strongest men were at the front. But the hangman's noose might have been their lot had not Clay stepped into the breach. Seeing what was sure to come



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about, and without consulting either side, on February 12, 1833, he introduced, in behalf of union and peace, a compromise bill providing for a gradual reduction of the tariff until 1842, when it should be reduced to a horizontal rate of twenty per cent. When Clay's friends protested that by introducing this bill he was throwing away his chance to be President, he made answer, "I would rather be right than be President," adding, "If there be any who want civil war, I am not one of them. As I stand before my God, I have looked beyond parties and regarded only the vast interests of this united people." Clay's bill was accepted by the nullifiers, and became a law, known as the Compromise of 1833. Without delay the South Carolina convention rescinded the nullification ordinance. Thus the struggle of sections was put off for a generation. When at last the conflict came, the Union had grown clear around the slave section, and the North had become strong enough to preserve it against the concerted withdrawal of the South. How acute was the crisis averted by Clay is revealed in one of Jackson's last recorded utterances. A friend asked him what he would have done



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with Calhoun and his associates had they persisted in their defiance of the government. "Hanged them, sir, as high as Haman," said the dying man, with eyes aflame. "They should have been a terror to traitors for all time."

The nullification incident ended, the President returned with renewed vigor to his war upon the Bank of the United States. He now resolved that the government deposits should be removed from the bank. The act of 1816, creating that institution, provided that the public funds might be removed by order of the Secretary of the Treasury, who must, however, inform Congress of his reason for the removal; and as Congress had previously resolved, by heavy majorities, that the deposits were safe in the bank, Secretary McLane declared his unwillingness to issue such an order. But the President was not to be thwarted in his purpose. In May, 1833, McLane was transferred to the State Department, Livingston being made minister to France, and was succeeded in the Treasury by William J. Duane, of Pennsylvania. The new Secretary, however, refused to make the desired order, and, declining to resign, was summarily dismissed from office,



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Roger B. Taney, the Attorney-General, being appointed in his place. This time no mistake was made. Taney at once ordered that after October 1 the public resources should no longer be deposited in the national bank, but with sundry State banks.

Such was the situation when Congress opened in December. The rage of the Whig leaders was unbounded, and found definite expression in a resolution of censure introduced into the Senate by Clay, which was adopted after an acrimonious debate which lasted from December until April. It contained a declaration that the President had assumed "authority and power not conferred by the Constitution but in derogation of both." Jackson protested in a message against the resolution, but the Senate refused to receive his protest. Before that it had rejected many of the President's appointments, including that of Taney as Secretary of the Treasury, Levi Woodbury being afterwards appointed to and confirmed in that office. Many of the President's friends, on the other hand, declaimed against the Senate as an aristocratic institution, which ought to be abolished. During this exciting period Benton



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remained Jackson's most powerful and steadfast ally in the Senate, opposed at every turn not only by Clay and Webster, but also by Calhoun, who had formed a temporary yet especially earnest and active alliance with the Whig leaders.

In the adoption of the vote of censure just referred to the opposition to Jackson reached high tide. Thereafter the Administration forces in Congress received rapid and steady acquisitions, and the opening of the Twenty-fourth Congress found the supporters of the President in a majority both in the House and in the Senate. The change thus effected brought to Washington a number of new men of mark, along with others who had performed previous service in Congress. Among those who took seats in the Senate during Jackson's second term were John Davis, of Massachusetts; John M. Niles, of Connecticut; Benjamin Swift, of Vermont; Samuel L. Southard, of New Jersey; Silas Wright, of New York, and James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, both advanced from seats in the House; John Norvell and Nathaniel P. Tallmadge, of the newly admitted State of Michigan; Thomas Morris, of Ohio; John M.



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Robinson, of Illinois; Lewis F. Linn, of Missouri; Richard Henry Bayard, of Delaware; Watkins Leigh, of Virginia; John P. King, of Georgia; and Alexander Porter, of Louisiana.

Other new Senators were John J. Crittenden, of Kentucky; William Campbell Preston, of South Carolina; and Robert J. Walker, of Mississippi. Crittenden, who had previously sat in the Senate, was one of the most effective debaters of his time. Although he rarely made a set speech, and never opened the debate, unless it was upon a bill reported from a committee of which he was chairman, he was always happy in retort or reply, and often triumphed in a war of words, even when engaged with a superior antagonist. Ready, dexterous, and fertile in resources, he delighted in arguments that were mixed up with mild and courteous personalities, and in contests of this kind seldom met his equal, nor was he ever known to forego an opportunity for a tilt with an antagonist of ability and character.

Preston, the grandnephew of Patrick Henry and the grandson of the hero of King's Mountain, whose name he bore, had studied law under William Wirt and at the University of Edin-



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burgh. He was thirty-eight years of age when as a Calhoun Democrat he entered the Senate, where he quickly confirmed the forensic reputation that had preceded him. Not a few claim him as the most finished orator the South has ever produced, and there survive glowing traditions of his power to arouse his audiences to enthusiasm, and the next moment move them to tears. Yet he never spoke in Congress or to a popular assemblage without the most ample and careful preparation, and was wont to declare that he knew of no such thing as genius or natural inspiration.

Walker holds a unique place in political history. Born and reared in Pennsylvania, he early removed to Mississippi, which, while he was still several years under forty, honored him with a seat in the Senate, where he served until called to a place in Polk's Cabinet. Endowed with an unequalled memory, rare enthusiasm, and intense convictions, he early took a foremost place in the Senate, bringing to the discussion of every question all his peculiar powers. Although he excelled on the hustings, it was with his pen that he most effectively shaped the thought of his fellows, and it has aptly been



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said of him that as "a political essayist he was what Charles James Fox was as a parliamentary orator." No other American, unless it be Hamilton or Jefferson, has exercised a greater influence upon the minds of statesmen.

Andrew Stevenson, who had held the Speakership for several years, resigned that post, in 1834, to become minister to England. He was succeeded by John Bell, who at the end of a single term gave way to James K. Polk. Among those who completed their first term while Bell held the gavel were three future Speakers, Linn Boyd and John White, of Kentucky, and John W. Davis, of Indiana, and two future Presidents, Millard Fillmore, of New York, and Franklin Pierce, of New Hampshire. Fillmore served in the House for ten years, but Pierce left it at the close of his second term to enter the Senate. Horace Binney, the eminent Philadelphia advocate, was, perhaps, the most striking figure in the House during the Twenty-third Congress, which also included Joseph Trumbull, of Connecticut, a grandson of the Revolutionary patriot; William Slade, of Vermont, later governor of his State; Aaron Vanderpoel, of New York, whose power



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of lung and readiness in debate won for him the sobriquet of the "Kinderhook roarer;" James A. Pearce, a clear-headed, hard-working legislator, who from 1843 until his death was a member of the Senate; Samuel F. Vinton, the rival of Corwin on the Ohio stump; George W. Jones, of Michigan, then at the threshold of a checkered career, and destined to outlive three generations of public men; George C. Dromgoole, twelve years a member from Virginia; Joseph R. Underwood, of Kentucky, a veteran of 1812, who afterwards sat in the Senate; Bailie Peyton, of Tennessee; and Francis W. Pickens and Henry L. Pinckney, of South Carolina.

Henry A. Wise, of Virginia, became a member of the House in 1833, and two years later Caleb Cushing entered that body from Massachusetts. During his six years of service "Wise of Accomac," as he was called, made himself as dreaded a factor in debate as John Randolph had been in another and earlier era. A native of the Eastern Shore, lank and thin, with deep-set, piercing eyes, low, broad forehead, light hair worn long behind the ears, a large mouth, with thin lips and broad chin,



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and garbed habitually in old-fashioned attire, Wise's qualities as a debater were unique, original, and, as a rule, resistless. Fluent of speech, his stand-point was always his own, his opinions independent, and his utterance of them fierce and fearless, though often enlivened by a native humor and a keen wit. Jackson and Van Buren, while Wise remained in Congress, had no more virulent and able opponent in that body.

The talents of Cushing, who later on was to form a brief working alliance with Wise in support of the Tyler Administration, were of a very different and, perhaps, higher order. When he entered the House in 1835, Cushing, now best remembered as one of the ablest of American diplomats, and as an international and constitutional lawyer who in his day had few equals in the United States, was still a very young man, but he had already won high rank at the bar, and had travelled extensively in Europe, where he had stored his mind with rare acquisitions of knowledge. He remained eight years in the House, taking his place from the first among its leaders. An unceasing student, what others knew imperfectly he knew fully, and so



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well disciplined was his mind that he could at once arrange his thoughts and bring them to bear on any given point. He had, moreover, a power of clear statement, and this, with a striking presence, a good voice, and a distinct enunciation, made him a telling and effective speaker, and, when he desired to be, a most fascinating talker.

Strongly intrenched in every avenue to power, the Democratic party, in the closing days of Jackson's second term, exhibited a state of organization and discipline hitherto unknown in American politics. The President's personal prestige was now at meridian, and its potency to work the rebuke and humiliation of the Whigs was shown in striking manner during the second session of the Twenty-fourth Congress. Immediately after the adoption of the Senate resolution censuring Jackson for the removal of the public funds from the Bank of the United States Benton gave formal notice of his intention to move an expunging resolution, pledging himself to prosecute this purpose until he succeeded or his political career came to an end. And in this, as in all other matters, he was as good as his word.



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For upward of two years Benton's resolution continued to be the subject of acrimonious debate in the Senate. The contest was carried into the State elections, and several Whig Senators resigned in consequence of instructions received from their Legislatures. In this way the number of Democratic Senators steadily increased; and so, in January, 1837, a few weeks before Jackson's retirement from office, Benton's persistency had its reward, and the resolution of censure was expunged. The closing debate continued until far into the night of the seventh day, and called forth all the powers of the Whig and Democratic leaders. After the final vote, Benton moved that the order of the Senate be carried into effect.

Then the secretary, opening the manuscript journal of 1834, drew broad black lines around the obnoxious resolution, and wrote across its face, "Expunged by order of the Senate this 16th day of January, in the year of our Lord 1837." The jubilation of Jackson's followers was unbounded. Benton's lasted for life. Long after the event, when he wrote his "Thirty Years' View," his elation was unabated. "The gratification of General Jackson," he says, "was



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extreme. He gave a grand dinner to the expungers (as they were called) and their wives; and being too weak to sit at the table, he only met the company, placed the 'head expunger' in his chair, and withdrew to his sick-chamber. That expurgation! It was the crowning mercy of his civil, as New Orleans had been of his military, life."

So ended Jackson's long fight against the Bank of the United States. Its close marked the renewal of another and mightier contest which was to hold the attention of Congress for a quarter of a century, and end at last in the shock of arms. Sixteen years had passed since the adoption of the Missouri Compromise. During that time the abolition movement had gathered force and volume until there existed in the North more than a thousand antislavery societies. The only way, however, in which these organizations could get their case before Congress was by presenting petitions for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. Unwilling to receive such petitions, or to allow any discussion of the question, Congress, in 1836, enacted a rule providing that all petitions, resolutions, or papers relating in any way or to



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any intent whatsoever with slavery should, without being either printed or referred, be laid upon the table, and that no further action whatever be had upon them.

John Quincy Adams refused to vote on the adoption of this rule, but when his name was called arose in his seat and denounced it as a direct violation of the Constitution, the rules of the House, and the rights of his constituents. This dramatic protest opened a parliamentary battle which went on for eight years. At every stage of this long fight for the right of petition, to which he felt that a deadly blow had been dealt, Adams contended single-handed against all the champions of slavery. Fear was unknown to him, nor could denunciation, abuse, and threats change his course. Always master of himself, even at the white-heat of anger, he was terrible in invective and matchless at repartee, while his powers of keen analysis, mastery of parliamentary usage, and rare gift of divining the enemy's probable mode of attack gave him an immense advantage, and at last crowned him victor.

Session after session Adams returned to the assault until finally, in December, 1844, from



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his seat in the House, he saw the cowardly "gag-rule" defeated by a vote of one hundred and eight to eighty, and the right of petition triumphantly vindicated. At an age when most men rest from their labors he had enacted the most luminous and daring chapter in his career.



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# CHAPTER XII

## A DAY OF FIRST THINGS

THE period of Jackson's Presidency, one of the most remarkable in history, was nowhere more remarkable than in the United States, for it was coincident with the introduction and development of railroads, steam navigation on the ocean, agricultural machinery, anthracite coal, friction-matches, and the modern newspaper; and with an increased immigration from Europe, the rise of the abolitionists, and the flowering of American literature, when to the names of Irving, Cooper, and Bryant were added those of Longfellow, Hawthorne, Holmes, and Whittier.

The capital city felt in many ways the effect of the new order. One of these was the construction of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, with a branch leading to Washington. The cars at the outset were drawn by horses, and for a time a car was propelled by sails, making, with a fair wind, some fifteen miles an hour; but, in the end, a locomotive was constructed and



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driven by Peter Cooper,—a combination of belts and cogs, with a blower kept in motion by a cord attached to one of the wheels. English builders had asserted that no engine could be constructed to turn a curve of less than nine hundred feet, yet Cooper's engine ran around the curves of the Baltimore and Ohio, some of which were only two hundred feet. The coming of the iron horse was hailed with excited joy by the residents of the capital, and prompted an operetta entitled "The Railroad," written by George Washington Parke Custis, a grandson of Mrs. Washington, and adopted son of the first President. One of the songs in the operetta began,—

Of each wonderful plan
E'er invented by man,
That which nearest perfection approaches
Is a road made of iron,
Which horses ne'er tire on,
And travelled by steam, in steam coaches.

This song was occasionally sung at festive boards by its author, and the elder Joseph Jefferson repeated it before delighted crowds whenever the company of players of which he was a member performed in Washington. It



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was during one of these visits that the younger Joseph Jefferson, then a child of six years, made his first appearance upon any stage, enacting a youthful and piping Jim Crow as a foil to the maturer performance of Thomas D. Rice. Although it was not until long after Jackson's time that the play became a regular amusement in Washington, the elder Booth came now and then from his Maryland farm to charm capital audiences with his impassioned renderings of Shakesperian rôles. Jackson was not a lover of the theatre, but he rarely missed a performance by Booth; and in the winter of 1833 he went, as did nearly every one else in Washington, to witness the widely heralded appearance of Fanny Kemble. The niece of the great Siddons was then in the flush of young womanhood, lithe and graceful, with black hair and brilliant eyes, set forth by expressive features. Washington saw her as Juliet, to her father's Romeo, as Portia and Constance, as Julia in "The Hunchback," and as Juliana in "The Honeymoon." She failed to conquer as an actress despite her careful training, but soon found an American husband in Pierce Butler, a wealthy South Carolina lawyer and planter.



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A familiar and not always welcome figure in the public places and gatherings of the capital during the third and fourth decades of the century was Mrs. Anne Royall, the widow of a Revolutionary officer, who, visiting Washington in search of a pension when the younger Adams was President, soon decided to make it her permanent abiding-place. She accordingly set up a small press on Capitol Hill, and for several years published a weekly paper, first called *Paul Pry* and afterwards *The Hamilton.* Visitors to the city were promptly called upon by Mrs. Royall; if they subscribed to her journal she gave them flattering mention in the next issue, but if they refused they were abused in a merciless manner. Mrs. Royall had been a comely woman in her youth, but her good looks disappeared as age crept upon her, while her temper took an even keener edge. John Quincy Adams was one of those who often felt the sting of her tongue, and he described her as going about "like a virago-errant in enchanted armor, redeeming herself from the cramps of indigence by the notoriety of her eccentricities and the forced currency they gave to her publications." Jackson, on the other hand, looked with a lenient



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eye upon her shortcomings, and gave her a kindly welcome whenever she visited him. "Old Mrs. Royall," writes Francis P. Blair, "called in the other day with one of her books to present to him. When she opened the budget he saw a partridge in the feathers, which she had bought for her dinner. He invited her in, and the poor old woman made a heavy meal with him. I came in just as the old lady escaped with her partridge; and . . . he told me the story, saying that he had made it a rule all his life that nobody should ever go out of his house hungry." A glimpse of Old Hickory one would not willingly lose!

Dame Royall, who died in 1854, at an advanced age, represents one phase of capital journalism in Jackson's time; the name of Nathaniel P. Willis stands for another. The Leigh Hunt of the drawing-rooms, as Dr. Palmer calls him, became associated with the New York *Mirror* in 1831, and for several years thereafter spent much of his time in Washington, sending weekly letters to his journal, in which the doings and small-talk of capital society were handled with grace and charm. Willis, who was then a slender young man of thirty, full of poetry and



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cheerfulness, knew how to endow even trifles with interest, and his Washington letters, in their way, have never been surpassed.

Willis, however, in introducing social gossip and personal description and anecdote into his letters, only followed an example set by the elder James Gordon Bennett, who from 1827 to 1832 was Washington correspondent of the New York *Courier*. Bennett founded the New York *Herald* in 1835, and a little later Theodore N. Parmelee, whose "Recollections of an Old Stager" are most delightful reading, became the Washington representative of the new journal, serving as such through several Administrations. James Brooks, long the dean of capital correspondents, began his letters to the Portland *Advertiser* in 1832, and four years later his younger brother Erastus settled in Washington as the correspondent of the New York *Advertiser*. When James Brooks established the New York *Express*, Erastus became his partner, and acted as Washington correspondent of the *Express* during sixteen successive sessions of Congress.

Nathan Sargent, a native of Vermont, who had been a lawyer and judge in Alabama and an unsuccessful Whig editor in Pennsylvania,



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became a Washington correspondent in 1836, writing first for the *United States Gazette* and afterwards for the Philadelphia *Press*. Sargent's trenchant letters, to which he signed the pen-name of Oliver Oldschool, often provoked anger and dismay at the Capitol, and on one occasion Charles Jared Ingersoll, of Pennsylvania, moved his expulsion from the desk that had been assigned him "in order that the honor and dignity of the House might be maintained;" but John Quincy Adams arose and remarked that the correspondent "was as respectable as the honorable member from Pennsylvania himself," and the motion was not pressed. Sargent, a devoted friend and follower of Clay, whose life he wrote, served at different times as sergeant-at-arms of the House, register of the treasury, and commissioner of customs. His "Public Men and Events," written towards the close of his life, remains a mine of information for the student of our political history.

Contemporary with the brothers Brooks and with Sargent were Sylvester S. Southworth, Edward L. Stevens, James M. Rae, Edward Hart, James E. Harvey, later minister to Portugal; Thomas M. Brewer, of the Boston *Atlas*,



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who subsequently attained eminence as a naturalist; Edmund Burke, of the *New Hampshire Argus,* three times a member of the House from his State; Jesse E. Dow, who had been a sailor and wrote prose and verse with equal facility; and Francis J. Grund, of the Baltimore *Sun* and Philadelphia *Ledger.* All of these men were writers of pith and vigor, but Grund demands especial mention as the most versatile and gifted member of the group. A man of enormous energy and unfailing resources, he was the ready master of a caustic pen and the terror of a majority of the public men of his period.

The Anak of Washington journalism during Jackson's time, and for many years thereafter, was John C. Rives, who, in 1832, assumed the business management of the newly established *Globe.* When in 1849 Francis P. Blair retired from the editorship he became its sole proprietor, and so continued until his death. Rives stood six feet four in his stockings and weighed two hundred and forty pounds. He was one of the shrewdest of men, but had besides the saving gift of humor and a warm and kindly heart, which made him the steadfast friend of



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merit in misfortune. It was his frequent boast that when, having acquired wealth, he sought a wife, he chose one from the threescore young women employed in the bindery of his office; and he was always sure to add that he could not have made a better choice. Generous in the extreme, Rives, during the Civil War, gave more than thirty thousand dollars to the wives of soldiers who had enlisted in the Union army from the District of Columbia.

Peter Force, mayor of Washington during the closing years of Jackson's Administration, was, like Rives, a graduate of the printer's case. In 1830 the *National Journal,* in which Force had vigorously supported the Administration of John Quincy Adams, ceased to exist. Many years before that date, being fond of historical research, he had begun to collect manuscripts, books, and pamphlets bearing on American history and antiquities; and in 1833 he was authorized by Congress to compile and publish a documentary history of the colonial period under the title of "American Archives." Force labored for twenty years at his giant's task with unceasing energy and enthusiasm, but, in 1853, by which time he had issued a large number of



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folio volumes, the publication, owing to a misunderstanding about the law authorizing it, was discontinued by Secretary Marcy. Force, though cruelly disappointed, continued to increase his collection of material, even mortgaging his real estate to do so. A few months before his death, in 1867, it was bought by the government and placed in the Library of Congress. It contains sixty-two thousand books and pamphlets, many of them rare, and is considered by some the most valuable collection of its kind in existence.

One of those who took a lively and sympathetic interest in Force's enterprise during its earlier stages was Chief Justice Marshall. The death of the latter, in July, 1835, at the age of eighty, removed a venerated and masterful figure from Washington life, and at the same time gave Jackson opportunity to deal his political adversaries another humiliating blow. The refusal of the Senate, at the dictation of the Whig leaders, to confirm the nomination of Roger B. Taney for Secretary of the Treasury bred in his chief a fierce resolve to place him on the Supreme Court bench, and when Justice Duval resigned, in January, 1835, Taney was



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nominated to fill the vacancy. The Senate refused to act upon this nomination, but when it reconvened in December a majority of its members were Democratic, and the President, Marshall's place being vacant, was now able to compass his darling project more impressively than he had before conceived. Taney was, therefore, nominated, and promptly confirmed, chief justice.

Jackson, during his two terms, made six other appointments to the Supreme Court bench. John McLean, who had been Postmaster-General under Adams, was named in 1829 to succeed Justice Washington. Jackson's second appointee was Henry Baldwin, a man of marked intellectual power, who had long been the leader of the bar in Western Pennsylvania. The vacancy caused by Justice Johnson's death in 1834 was filled by the appointment of James M. Wayne, who had been a judge of the Superior Court of Georgia. The appointment of Taney as chief justice was coincident with that of Philip P. Barbour, of Virginia, to succeed Justice Duval. The number of justices was increased to nine in the following year, and there were chosen as the new members of the court John Catron,



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of Tennessee, and John McKinley, a native of Virginia, who had been at different periods a member of the Senate and House from Alabama. Justice McKinley, however, was nominated by Van Buren, William Smith, who had been named by Jackson, having declined to serve.

A piquant story attaches to the appointment of Justice Catron. He had been for many years a member of the Supreme Court of Tennessee, and being a man of simple tastes and moderate ambitions, was wholly satisfied with his lot. Not so his wife, who, when she read in the newspapers that two justices were to be added to the federal Supreme Court, resolved to set out for Washington and ask the appointment of her husband, a man, she assumed, as well qualified for the place as any in America. Catron, though much protesting, was compelled to keep her company. Their journey to the capital ended one morning before sunrise. The wife, despite the untimely hour, insisted on driving straight to the White House, where, leaving the judge in the carriage, she asked for an audience with the President. Jackson, himself an early riser, gave her the cordial welcome of an old friend, and, the compliments of the hour



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ended, inquired in what manner he could serve her.

"I have come all the way from Tennessee," she said, "to ask you to appoint my husband to one of the new justiceships of the Supreme Court."

"Where is the judge?" asked the President, who cherished grateful recollections of the stout support Catron had given him in many a hard-fought political battle.

"He is outside in our carriage. He did not want to come, but I made him," answered Mrs. Catron.

"Then, by the Eternal, I will appoint him," was the laughing reply. And so on March 3, 1837, the day before his second term expired, Jackson made Catron an associate justice, which position the latter filled with wisdom and honor until his death in the last days of the Civil War.

Marshall's passing was separated from that of John Randolph, of Roanoke, by the space of two years. Randolph, in 1830, following his brief term of service in the Senate, accepted the Russian mission, but soon returned to America, with the hand of death upon him. He ar-



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rived in Washington in the spring of 1833 on his way to Philadelphia for medical aid, and hearing that Clay was about to address the Senate, he had himself taken to the Capitol and laid upon a sofa in the rear of the Senate chamber. "Lift me up," said he, when Clay arose to speak. "I must hear that voice once more." He was lifted up. Clay, as soon as he had finished, made his way to Randolph's side, and held out his hand. "I am dying," said Randolph, "and I came here expressly to have this interview with you." Then, with moistened eyes, the two men, who had often met in keen encounter upon the floors of Congress and once in conflict upon the field, cordially clasped hands, voiced a few broken words, and parted forever in peace and good-will. A few weeks later Randolph ceased to live.

Washington by his death lost as unusual a figure as has ever given piquancy and color to its social and political life; but it again made acquaintance with an equally picturesque and far more robust personality when, in 1832, General Sam Houston visited the capital in the interest of the Cherokee Indians, among whom he had, for several years, made his home. Hous-



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ton, at an earlier period, had been for two terms a member of the House, and after that governor of Tennessee, but he now wore the garb of his Indian associates, and had, so the gossip ran, adopted many of their habits. He had not been long in Washington when, deeming himself outraged by reflections on his conduct made in the course of debate by William Stansberry, a member of the House from Ohio, he attacked the latter and gave him a severe beating. Arrested for a breach of privilege, he received a reprimand at the bar of the House and was fined five hundred dollars; but Jackson, who had him a welcome guest at the Executive Mansion, remitted the fine. Houston left Washington soon after this incident, and when he came again to the capital it was as a Senator from Texas, whose independence he had done more than any other man to achieve.

Washington, during Jackson's Presidency, also saw much of Nicholas Biddle, president and directing spirit of the Bank of the United States. A combination of poet, scholar, and financier, Biddle was then in the prime of a splendid manhood, tall and full-figured, with a large head, high forehead, hazel eyes, and a



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mouth and chin that indicated great firmness. He came of Quaker stock, a fact to which, doubtless, was due the perfect imperturbability that never left him, no matter how fierce the storm that raged about him. He had also the high art of blending dignity with ease and suavity; and by the invariable cheerfulness of his temper he long baffled his opponents and sustained his friends. Self-poised and genial, no harsh word ever escaped his lips, and no provocation could draw from him a hasty or angry expression. If he finally died of a broken heart, as some of his friends thought, it was the heart of a gallant gentleman, who, if nothing else, left his country good manners to consider for some future span of our social existence.

Harriet Martineau, the English author, came to America in 1834, travelled for two years through New England and the Southern States, and on her return home recorded her impressions in a book entitled "Society in America." The three fat volumes which make up this work afford many a luminous and diverting picture of the Washington in whose streets and hostels Sam Houston loitered in Indian garb and "Nick" Biddle held frequent and quiet con-



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ference with his friends. Miss Martineau passed several months at the capital; and during her stay every member of note in the House and Senate constantly resorted to her parlors. She was a favorite with Clay, who spent many evenings at her fireside, and she describes him as sitting quite upright on the sofa, with snuff-box ever in hand, discoursing steadily, in soft, deliberate tones, on any topic of American affairs that might occur, "always amusing us with the moderation of estimate and speech which so impetuous a nature has been able to attain."

There, too, was Webster leaning back at his ease, telling stories, cracking jokes, shaking his sides with burst after burst of laughter, or "smoothly discoursing to the perfect felicity of the logical part of one's constitution." And there, too, was Calhoun, "looking as if he were never born and never could be extinguished. He kept our understandings at a stretch, and then left us to analyze as best we could his closely theoretical talks." Among other prominent visitors, a very frequent one was Justice Story, whose talk, his hostess tells us, "would gush out for hours, but there never was too



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much of it,—it was so heartfelt, so lively, so various; and his face all the while, notwithstanding his gray hair, showing all the mobility and ingenuousness of a child's." Benton, however, she neither liked by instinct nor analysis, and she says of him, as he appeared in the Senate, that "he sat swelling amid his piles of papers and books, looking like a being designed by nature to be a good-humored barber or innkeeper, but forced by fate to make himself into a mock-heroic Senator."

Miss Martineau made many visits to the House and Senate,—the latter she pronounced the most imposing body of men she had ever seen, "the stamp of originality impressed on every one;" and, of course, she received and accepted an invitation to dine with the President. She found Jackson, when they met, quite disposed for conversation. "Indeed, he did nothing but talk." A few days later Miss Martineau witnessed an attempt to assassinate Jackson, made one afternoon as he was leaving the Capitol. His assailant was a journeyman painter named Lawrence. Stepping in front of the President, Lawrence snapped two loaded pistols at him in rapid succession, but the percus-



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sion-cap of each exploded without igniting the charge, and he was at once seized and handcuffed. "The attack," writes Miss Martineau, "threw Mr. Jackson into a tremendous passion. He fears nothing, but his temper is not equal to his courage. Instead of putting the event calmly aside and proceeding with the business of the hour, it was found necessary to put him in his carriage and take him home." An investigation proved beyond a doubt that Lawrence was insane,—he charged Jackson with having deprived him of the English crown; but the President, until his dying day, cherished the belief that the friends of the Bank of the United States had connived at his assassination.

A second assault was made on Jackson during his Presidency. One day in May, 1833, while he was on his way to Frederick, Virginia, to witness the laying of the corner-stone of a monument to the mother of Washington, the steamboat touched at Alexandria, and a Virginian named Randolph came on board. Making his way into the cabin, where Jackson sat smoking his pipe, he advanced towards him, and struck him a heavy blow on the cheek. Jackson sprang to his feet, swearing he would



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chastise his assailant on the spot, but could not get at his adversary before the latter was seized and hurried ashore. No attempt was made to arrest Randolph, and he escaped on a horse which was in readiness.

A curious story lay behind this second assault. Randolph had been lieutenant of the "Constitution," of which Timberlake, the first husband of Mrs. Eaton, was purser. When Timberlake committed suicide the captain of the "Constitution" directed Randolph to take charge of the stores of the vessel, and temporarily discharge the duties of that officer. Randolph, though a brave and capable officer, had small aptitude for business. When the ship arrived at Norfolk, and he was required to settle the purser's accounts, there were discrepancies that could not be accounted for, and he was apparently largely in arrears. A court-martial was ordered, and Randolph, who alleged that Timberlake was the offender, was fully acquitted on every charge and specification. Jackson, believing that Timberlake's wife and children had been wronged by Randolph, took another view of the case. He disapproved of the finding of the court, and Randolph, after



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a protracted controversy, was dismissed from the navy. Anger at the gross injustice he felt had been done him caused Randolph to assault Jackson, but there could, of course, be no palliation of his conduct towards an aged and venerable man. The President, speaking of the matter to a former messmate of Randolph, expressed his astonishment that a man of known gallantry should have made a personal assault upon him. "If he felt himself aggrieved at what I had done," said Jackson, "I would have had no hesitation in waiving my rank and giving him satisfaction."

The White House, when Miss Martineau was a guest there, had lately been refurnished at a cost of several thousand dollars. Particular attention had been given to the East Room, which was now adorned with four mantel-pieces of black Italian marble, each one surmounted by a large mirror in a heavily gilded ornamental frame, while a rich Brussels carpet covered the floor, and three large cut-glass mirrors hung from the ceiling. There was also a profusion of gilded chairs and sofas upholstered with blue damask; heavy curtains of blue and yellow moreen shaded the windows, and French



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china vases, filled with artificial flowers, adorned the mantel-pieces and the three marble-topped centre-tables.

Simple in his tastes, Jackson cared little for this display of costly furniture. He elected, instead, to pass the greater portion of his time in his office on the second floor of the White House, smoking a corn-cob pipe and holding familiar converse with visitors and friends. He also delighted, until enfeebled by sickness, to take daily walks about Washington, invariably greeting whoever he chanced to meet with a hearty "How do you do, sir? I hope to see you well, sir." Horse-racing was another diversion into which he entered with keenest zest, and he was nearly always to be seen at the spring and fall races over the National Course just north of Washington. Jackson, in 1836, had a filly of his own raising brought from the Hermitage and entered for a race by Donelson, his private secretary; nor did he conceal his chagrin when the filly was beaten by an imported Irish colt owned by Captain Robert Stockton, of the navy, and he had to pay several hundred dollars in lost wagers.

Bailie Peyton, twice a member of the House



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from Tennessee, used to describe with relish a visit he once made to the National Course with Jackson, Van Buren, and a few others, to witness the training of some horses for an approaching race. They went on horseback, Jackson riding his favorite gray horse, and wearing a white fur hat with a broad band of white crape, which towered above the whole group. The President greatly enjoyed the trials of speed until a horse named Busiris began to rear and plunge. Riding forward to give some energetic advice to the jockey, he suddenly discovered the Vice-President ambling along at his side on an easy-going nag. "Mr. Van Buren," shouted Old Hickory, "get behind me, sir. They will run over you, sir!" and the Little Magician quickly retired to the rear of his chief, which, Peyton was wont to add, was his proper place.

Van Buren, if content to take a place behind Jackson, had splendid reward for his submissiveness. A Democratic national convention, held at Baltimore, in May, 1835, quickly and unanimously nominated him for President; and in the campaign that followed there was no vital defection from the Democracy. The only open



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rebellion of any account, strange to say, centred in Tennessee; for, with all his influence, Jackson failed to control his own State either as to the nomination or in the election. It was said that Calhoun moved Hugh L. White to essay the defeat of his old chief's candidate, and White was accordingly nominated by the Legislature of his State.

Clay, fearing he could not be elected over Van Buren, refused to be a candidate. The Whigs, therefore, presented three candidates, —William Henry Harrison, Daniel Webster, and Willie P. Mangum. It was hoped that, by reason of this multiplicity of candidates, the election might be thrown into the House; but the hope proved a delusive one. Harrison, the Whig party's most general representative in the contest, received seventy-three electoral votes. Webster received the votes of Massachusetts, and Mangum those of North Carolina. White headed the poll in Tennessee and Georgia, receiving twenty-six votes. Van Buren, on the other hand, secured one hundred and seventy, a majority of forty-six over the combined votes of his rivals. No candidate for Vice-President receiving a majority of the votes, the Senate



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in due time elected Richard M. Johnson, who had been nominated with Van Buren.

The close of Jackson's second term was marked by scenes hardly less exciting than those which attended his first induction into office. One of his New York admirers, Meacham by name, in the winter of 1837 sent to the White House a cheese of mammoth size. It was larger in circumference than a hogshead, and on the box in which it was brought to Washington was a portrait of Jackson surmounted by the American eagle. The President on Washington's Birthday held a farewell reception, at which this cheese was cut and distributed in the anteroom of the White House as a parting gift. Two men, with knives made from saw blades, cut into the unwieldy mass, giving each applicant a piece weighing two or three pounds. Some of them had provided themselves with paper in which to wrap their portions, but many carried them away in their hands without covering, several hundred pounds being thus distributed or carelessly trodden underfoot. Thousands of visitors of high and low degree, after getting past the cheese, elbowed and pushed their way into the Blue Room, where they were



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presented to Jackson, whom feeble health compelled to remain seated in his chair. Mrs. Donelson, his niece, stood at his side, while behind him, with a smile and a bow for every one of the passing throng, was President-elect Van Buren. The Jacksonian era ended as it began, with the crowd triumphant.



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## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DEMOCRACY IN ECLIPSE

WHILE on an afternoon in February, 1837, the electoral votes were being counted in the presence of the two houses of Congress Senator Clay remarked to Vice-President Van Buren, with courteous significance, "It is a cloudy day, sir."

"But the sun will shine on the fourth of March, sir," was the confident reply.

And it did, for not a cloud flecked the sky on the day of Van Buren's inauguration. Thousands of people came from all parts of the country to witness the ceremony, and it was through crowds of cheering admirers that the President and President-elect—Jackson had risen from a sick-bed that he might grace the scene—drove from the White House to the Capitol. A volunteer brigade of cavalry and infantry formed their escort, and they rode in a carriage made of wood from the frigate "Constitution," presented by the Democrats of New York. Van Buren read his inaugural address



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from the eastern portico of the Capitol, and the oath was administered by Chief Justice Taney, after which the President and ex-President returned to the White House, where for hours a surging tide of humanity swept past the new chief magistrate congratulating him upon his inauguration. Two inaugural balls were given in the evening, the largest being at Carusi's saloon, not a drinking-place, as the name might imply, but a large dancing-hall in which were held all of the important social events of the period.

Van Buren's wife had been dead for many years when he became President, and for a time there was no mistress of the White House. But only for a time. The President's eldest son and private secretary, Abraham Van Buren, a graduate of West Point and a former aide on the staff of General Worth, was married in November, 1837, to Angelica Singleton, a South Carolina heiress. Mrs. Van Buren, assisted by the wives of the Cabinet officers, received with her father-in-law, the President, on New Year's Day, 1838, and thereafter filled the place of mistress of the White House. She added to youth and beauty grace of manner, tact, and



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vivacity, and her social leadership was long gratefully remembered in Washington.

Another resident of the White House during the Van Buren Administration was the President's younger son, John, then a tall, handsome young man of thirty, whose after-fame as a lawyer, orator, and wit still lives. One finds in all the memoirs and sketches of half a century ago reference to John Van Buren's manners and his gifts as a wit and raconteur. He was attorney-general of New York in 1846, but two years later left the Democratic party with his father, and when the latter was nominated by the Free-Soil party, the son's oratorical abilities were most effective in securing converts for the new departure. John Van Buren afterwards returned to the Democratic fold, and whenever taunted by his associates as a renegade, his sole excuse for his former action was a quaint allusion to the barnyard anecdote, "Dad was under the hay."

Van Buren had not been long in the White House before he had it refurnished in expensive fashion, while at the same time he restored the social usages which had been followed by Washington, Madison, and other of the earlier



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Presidents. He made the Executive Mansion pleasant and attractive to all,—this without compromising the dignity of his high office,—and genial and social, even with his most decided opponents, he soon attracted crowds to his levees and receptions. Thus the White House lost the cold and depressing air it had worn during the closing days of the Jackson Administration, when increasing age and infirmity made its occupant austere, arrogant, and impatient, too often, of contradiction.

A graphic picture of the Washington of Van Buren's time has a place in the published recollections of James G. Berret, sometime mayor of the city. Washington in 1839, Mr. Berret writes, was still "a straggling village. There was not a paved street, and the sidewalks were very imperfect, while the crossings from one side of the street to the other were formed of narrow flagstones, and the gutters of cobblestones rendered necessary to carry off the drainage, which at that time was entirely upon the surface. There was no gas-light and no water except what was taken from the pumps distributed over the city. A pump would often get out of order, and that always created trouble



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in the neighborhood, not only with the families but with the servants, who had to travel off a square or two to find a pump and get water for domestic wants. There were no carriages nor omnibuses nor conveyances of any sort. The lighting was with oil lamps, sparsely distributed, and on dark nights the population had to grope their way about the town as best they could. But with all these difficulties," adds Mr. Berret, "Washington possessed many advantages for social enjoyment and comfort. The members of Congress identified themselves with the people of the city and exchanged a generous hospitality; so that from a social point of view that period marked an agreeable era in the history of Washington life."

Van Buren, in official matters, at first made no departure from the path marked out by his predecessor. Jackson's Cabinet was retained in office: John Forsyth as Secretary of State; Levi Woodbury as Secretary of the Treasury; Mahlon Dickerson as Secretary of the Navy, which post he had held since 1834; Amos Kendall as Postmaster-General; and Benjamin F. Butler, who in 1833 had succeeded Taney, as Attorney-General. One place was vacant,—that of Sec-



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retary of War, through the appointment of Cass as minister to France in 1836; and this was given to Joel R. Poinsett, one of the few prominent men of South Carolina who had opposed nullification. Dickerson was succeeded in 1838 by James K. Paulding, of New York, and in 1840 Kendall gave way to John M. Niles, of Connecticut. Butler, who was the President's old law partner, left the department of justice in 1838. His successor was Felix Grundy, who also resigned at the end of two years. Van Buren's last Attorney-General was Henry D. Gilpin, a once prominent but now almost forgotten member of the Philadelphia bar, who had served as solicitor of the treasury under Jackson.

Van Buren's political success up to 1836 had been extraordinary, and he had, moreover, truly great talent and ability for public affairs. He came to the Presidency, however, in an unpropitious hour, for he had been only a few weeks in office when he was compelled to face the financial crash of 1837. It will be remembered that when, in 1833, the public funds were removed from the Bank of the United States, they were deposited in certain State banks.



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These institutions, which soon came to be known as "the pet banks," loaned the public moneys on securities often of doubtful value or worthless,—an unwise situation of private trade and speculation, which at the end of four years bore melancholy fruit in general bankruptcy. Banks suspended payment, business houses collapsed, and manufacturers were compelled to discharge their workmen. Funds at the same time being unobtainable for the removal eastward of the Western crops, the price of foodstuffs rose with fatal rapidity, and there was much distress in the large cities of the Atlantic seaboard.

The President, to allay popular clamor, convened Congress in an extra session called for September 4. His message to that body, on its assembling, was one of the ablest ever penned by any President. It included a masterly analysis of the financial situation and of the causes that had led to it, and outlined a plan for the divorce of the fiscal affairs of the government from those of private individuals and corporations by the establishment of an independent treasury for the safe-keeping and disbursement of the public moneys. This idea was not new,



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but it was a favorite with Van Buren, and with signal energy and firmness he enforced it upon Congress. The Whigs, however, led by Clay and Webster, vehemently opposed it; and it was not until near the close of his administration that Van Buren succeeded in procuring the assent of Congress to the radical measure that divorced the treasury from private banking and trade. The measure, though formally repealed by the Whig Congress of 1842, was reenacted four years later, and has ever since held its place under all changes of administration.

The establishment of the independent treasury, accordingly, remains the crowning act of Van Buren's public career. Its achievement appears all the more remarkable when one remembers that it was wrung from a law-making body of exceptional strength and ability. Indeed, neither branch of Congress has ever contained a greater number of men already distinguished and to attain distinction than those who served therein during Van Buren's term. Among the new members of the House from New England were Charles G. Atherton, of New Hampshire, who later served two terms in the Senate; Nathan Clifford, of Maine, who



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WASHINGTON IN VAN BUREN'S TIME

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thus began a national career which carried him to a place on the bench of the Supreme Court; Leverett Saltonstall, of Massachusetts, a ready and resourceful debater; Joseph L. Tillinghast, of Rhode Island, who soon proved himself one of the best-equipped legislators of his time; and Truman Smith, of Connecticut, a man of unusual sagacity, who long exercised a potent though silent influence in national politics.

New York sent Ogden Hoffman, a brilliant advocate, who in his youth had fought with Decatur against the Barbary corsairs. John Sargent was again a member from Pennsylvania. Maryland was represented by John P. Kennedy, and Virginia by John Minor Botts and Robert M. T. Hunter, the latter two destined twenty years later to enact widely different rôles in the drama of secession. North Carolina returned Edward Stanley, and her sister State, Waddy Thompson and Robert Barnwell Rhett, the last named a fiery apostle of States'-rights, who, after twelve years of service as a Representative, was to succeed Calhoun in the Senate. Venerable John Pope, who a generation before had served his State in the Senate, was a member of the Kentucky delegation.



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Tennessee's contingent included Aaron V. Brown, subsequently governor of his State and Postmaster-General, and Meredith P. Gentry, one of the leaders of the Whig party, and an apt, powerful, and often eloquent debater. Henry S. Lane, of Indiana, and William H. Bissell, of Illinois, were each to become governor of his State, while similar honors were in store for James D. Doty, of Wisconsin, a man of great ability, commanding presence, and winning address.

Other new members of the House were Hugh S. Legare, of South Carolina; Sargeant S. Prentiss, of Mississippi; and Joshua R. Giddings, of Ohio. Legare, an offshoot of mingled Huguenot and Scottish stock, was a man of rare intellectual endowments, whose forensic powers remain one of the abiding traditions of the South. As a popular orator, however, he was not the equal of Prentiss, a native of Maine, who, removing at an early age to Mississippi, there rose, in a space of time extraordinarily brief, to a master-place at the bar. He was elected to the House as a Whig, in 1837, and, finding his seat preoccupied by the Democratic candidate at the election, he vindicated his



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claim in a speech nearly three days' long, which gave him a national reputation as an orator of the first rank. His claim having been rejected by the casting vote of Speaker Polk, he returned to Mississippi, and after a vigorous canvass was again elected by a large majority. Prentiss, during the remainder of his term, delivered several speeches remarkable for logical power, combined with intense energy, keen wit, and vivid imagination; but he soon tired of Congressional life, and in the spring of 1839 returned to the practice of his profession.

Legare, like Prentiss, served only a single term, and was never again in Congress; but Giddings sat for twenty years in the House, where he took a leading and at the first almost single-handed part in the long fight for the abolition of slavery. Six feet two inches in height, and broad in proportion, with rugged features and a massive head crowned in later life with a profusion of white hair, Giddings was the master of a ready and vehement style of oratory which soon made him a factor to be reckoned with in debate. Interruptions never disconcerted him. On the contrary, he welcomed them, and was never more in his element than when deal-



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ing quick and heavy blows to half a dozen Southerners who had undertaken to bait him, but who invariably fell back discomfited. For years before he left it he was called the "Father of the House," and the esteem and respect generally paid him were felt even by the Southern men, who recognized in the brave, clear-visioned old man a foe worthy of their steel.

Berrien, of Georgia, and Mangum, of North Carolina, in 1840 returned to the Senate, where they were now to serve for a dozen years or more, while Pennsylvania supplied a unique senatorial figure in Daniel Sturgeon, a doctor turned law-maker, who soon became known among his associates as the "silent Senator." Though a hard-working committee member, Sturgeon, during his twelve years in the Senate, never made but one speech, and that was to reiterate a remark he had made in committee, that "any Senator who says anything that would tend to the disruption of the Union is a black-hearted villain." Another silent Senator was Thomas Clayton, of Delaware, a man of the finest mental and moral caliber, who, though he seldom, if ever, addressed the Senate, exercised great influence on his fellow-members. One



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of Ohio's Senators was Benjamin Tappan, a member of the famous abolitionist family of that name, and himself a man of wit, courage, and sagacity; the other was William Allen, who took his seat in March, 1837, at an earlier age than any other federal Senator was ever elected.

Allen had previously sat for a single term in the House, and he served for twelve years in the Senate, where his majestic presence,—he was above six feet in height,—sturdy opinions, and sonorous and caustic oratory never failed to command attention. He lives in history as one of the few men who have put aside the Presidency when it was within their grasp. When the Baltimore convention of 1848 failed to agree upon either Cass or Van Buren as the Democratic candidate for President, a committee made up of supporters of both men waited upon Allen in Washington and urged him to accept the nomination for the sake of harmony. Though formally offered the nomination with the assurance that the convention would ratify the action of the committee, he refused, for the reason that he had been a personal friend and adviser of Cass and could not honorably abandon his canvass.



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Allen entered the Senate in time to participate, as a supporter of Van Buren, in the debate upon the independent treasury scheme. Another ardent advocate of the bill was Calhoun, who, having severed his late alliance with the Whigs, engaged with his usual vigor in support of the financial measures of the Administration. His defection, though not unexpected, was warmly resented by the Whigs, and, in February, 1838, Clay, as the mouth-piece of his party, attacked Calhoun in one of the most elaborate and finished speeches of his whole career. The argumentative portion of this speech, directed against the independent treasury scheme, was very able, and, so far as the case admitted, conclusive and unanswerable; but it was in his impeachment of Calhoun as a man of consistency and sound judgment that Clay put forth, and in the most effective form, his remarkable powers. He reviewed Calhoun's career for twenty years, omitting no important feature, and dwelling with cutting severity upon his desertion of the cause which he had long supported with so much zeal and ability.

Calhoun, cut to the quick, arose as soon as Clay had concluded, and announced that he



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would seek early opportunity to pay his respects to the Senator, adding that when he did so the debt between them would be fully discharged. His reply, when it came three weeks later, was remarkable for logical vigor, terse statement, and keen retort. The debate then subsided into a colloquy, ending in a spirit of courtesy and amicable feeling, but soon broke out again on a new point with so much personal bitterness as to sever all personal relations between the two Senators.

A few months after the debate between Clay and Calhoun the House was the theatre of a very different but not less memorable contest. Polk was re-elected Speaker in 1837, but when the Twenty-sixth Congress convened in December, 1839, the Whigs thought themselves strong enough to enter into the struggle for the Speakership. There were five Whig members from New Jersey whose election was contested, but whose names must be added to the roll if their party was to control the House. When the clerk, in calling the roll on the opening of the session, came to New Jersey, he stated that there being five contested seats from this State he should pass them over, not taking



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the responsibility of deciding whether they were elected or not.

A dozen Whig members were instantly on their feet protesting against the action of the clerk, who, however, refused to recede from the position he had taken, or submit to a vote of the House the resolutions that were offered him. There followed three days of disorder, confusion, and excitement, but on the morning of the fourth the venerable John Quincy Adams, who up to that time had taken no part in the conflict, came forward to quell the storm.

"What a scene we here present!" said he. "We degrade our constituents and the country. We do not and cannot organize, and why? Because the clerk of this House—the mere clerk whom we create, whom we employ, and whose existence depends on our will—usurps the throne and sets us, the Representatives, the vice-regents of the whole American people, at defiance and holds us in contempt."

"The clerk," a Democratic member interrupted, "will resign rather than call the State of New Jersey."

"Let him resign," rejoined Adams, with a withering look. "If we cannot organize in any



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other way; if this clerk of yours will not consent to our discharging the trust confided to us by our constituents, then let us imitate the example of the Virginia House of Burgesses, which, when the colonial Governor Dinwiddie ordered it to disperse, refused to obey the imperious and insulting mandate, and like men——"

Here the speaker was interrupted by a burst of applause, for the story of the old Raleigh tavern and the Apollo ball-room was a familiar one. When it subsided, Robert Barnwell Rhett, from the top of a desk, moved that Adams "take the chair of Speaker of the House, and officiate as presiding officer until the House be organized by the election of its constitutional officers." Rhett's motion, put by himself, was enthusiastically carried, and Adams conducted to the chair. He had now a most trying part to play, for the parties were evenly balanced, and in the eleven days of balloting for a Speaker that ensued his patience, wisdom, and judgment were severely tested. The contest at length ended in the triumph of the Whigs and the election of Robert M. T. Hunter as Speaker.

Those were stormy days in Congress. Personal altercations between members were of



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frequent occurrence, and the month in which fell the debate between Clay and Calhoun also witnessed a lamentable and fatal meeting at Bladensburg. Jonathan Cilley, a member of the House from Maine, took occasion, in the course of debate, to criticise a charge of corruption brought against an unnamed Congressman in a letter published in the New York *Courier and Enquirer*. James Watson Webb, editor of that journal, at once visited Washington, and sent a challenge to Cilley by William J. Graves, a member of the House from Kentucky. Cilley refused to accept the challenge on the ground that he had no acquaintance with Webb, whereupon Graves, feeling himself bound by the code to espouse the cause of his principal, himself challenged Cilley. This challenge was accepted, and the preliminaries were arranged between Henry A. Wise, as the second of Graves, and George W. Jones, as the second of Cilley.

The two men met at Bladensburg on the morning of February 24, 1838. The weapons used were rifles, at forty paces. Cilley was an expert marksman, while Graves was wholly unused to fire-arms. Three shots were exchanged. Between the second and third shots



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efforts were made to reach an amicable settlement. These failed, and at the third exchange Cilley, by what Graves always claimed was a chance shot, fell pierced through the heart. Graves, on seeing his antagonist fall, expressed a desire to render him some assistance, but was told by Jones that he was dead. The tragic taking-off of Cilley, a man of brilliant parts and a college classmate of Longfellow and Hawthorne, created as profound a sensation as had the death of Decatur eighteen years before, but his fate was not less pitiful than that of Graves, who lingered a few years a mental and physical wreck, wasting the brief remainder of his life in remorse and misery.

Washington life at this period had, however, its lighter as well as its graver side. Not only did President Van Buren give numerous entertainments at the White House, but he prevailed upon the members of his Cabinet and their principal subordinates to do the same, and at more than a score of houses fortnightly dinner-parties and evening receptions were given during the successive sessions of Congress. These dinner-parties, we are told, "were very much alike, and those who were in succession guests at dif-



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ferent houses often saw the same table ornaments, and were served by the same waiters, while the fare was prepared by the same cook. The guests were wont to assemble in the parlor, which was almost invariably connected with the dining-room by large folding-doors. When the dinner was ready the folding-doors were thrown open, and the table was revealed, covered with dishes and cut-glass ware. Soup was invariably served, followed by boiled fish, overdone roast beef or mutton, roast fowl or game in season, and a great variety of puddings, pies, cake, and ice-cream. The fish, meat, and fowl were carved and helped by the host, while the lady of the house distributed vegetables, the pickles, and dessert. Champagne, without ice, was sparingly supplied in long, slender glasses, but there was no lack of sound claret, and with the dessert several bottles of old madeira were generally produced by the host, who succinctly gave the age and history of each."

The same authority informs us in another place that "at the evening parties the carpet was lifted from the room set apart for dancing, and the floor was chalked with colors to protect the dancers from slipping. The music was almost



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invariably a first and second violin, with flute and harp accompaniments. Light refreshments, such as water-ices, lemonade, negus, and small cakes, were handed about on waiters between every two or three dances. The crowning glory, however, of the entertainment was the supper, which had been prepared under the supervision of the hostess, aided by some of her intimate friends, who had also loaned their china and silverware. The table was covered with *à la mode* beef, cold roast turkey, ducks, and chickens; fried and stewed oysters, blanc-mange, jellies, whips, floating-islands, candied oranges, and numerous varieties of tarts and cakes. Very often the young men, after having escorted the young ladies to their respective homes, would meet again at some oyster-house to go out on a lark, in imitation of the young English bloods in the favorite parts of 'Tom and Jerry.' Singing, or rather shouting, popular songs, they would break windows, wrench off knockers, call up doctors, and transpose sign-boards; nor was there a night-watchman to interfere with their roistering."

Few of the official or private functions of Van Buren's time were counted complete with-



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out the presence of the venerable widow of Alexander Hamilton, who spent her last years at the capital. Another welcome and honored guest in every Washington drawing-room was the aging and white-haired Dolly Madison. A part of the estate left by Madison when he died, in June, 1836, was the fine house at the corner of Madison Place and H Street, now the home of the Cosmos Club. It had been built about 1825 by Richard Cutts, the brother-in-law of Mrs. Madison, and had come into Madison's possession the year before his death, in settlement of a debt. Mrs. Madison was then too poor to occupy it, but in March, 1837, an act of Congress was approved by Jackson appropriating thirty thousand dollars to purchase Madison's diary of the debates and events connected with the framing of the Federal Constitution. This money, later supplemented by another generous appropriation for the purchase of the ex-President's unpublished papers, enabled Mrs. Madison to live in the city house; and in the fall of 1837 she gladly returned to the capital, which she had always loved, and at which she continued to reside until her death in July, 1849.



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Mrs. Madison's return to Washington renewed in private life the social triumphs she had achieved in earlier years, when her husband was successively Secretary of State and President. Looking over the company on the occasion of her first reception, she said to an old friend at her side, "What a difference twenty years make in the face of society! Here are young men and women not born when I left the capital, whose names are familiar, but whose faces are unknown to me." She retained, however, at sixty-five much of the fascination of her girlhood and young womanhood. She was quick to manifest hearty interest in both the old and the young, while her kindness of heart and gentleness of manner were unfailing. Her home fairly rivalled the White House as a social centre. The same distinguished personages who, on New Year's Days, paid their respects to the President hastened across the square to greet Mrs. Madison with all good wishes; and on every Fourth of July her parlors were thronged. The day of her death, at the age of seventy-eight, was one of sincere and universal mourning in Washington.

The Van Buren Administration came in under



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a cloud; it was destined to go out in the same way. Following the panic of 1837 there was partial recovery from the effects of that crisis. Business revived and foreign commerce began to regain its normal volume. But in October, 1839, there was a sudden change in the situation. The banks of Philadelphia suspended, and their example was generally followed, save in New York and New England. A paralyzing stupor again fell on trade and business; and again the farmer was unable to sell his products and the manufacturer compelled to discharge his workmen. These conditions told heavily against Van Buren's chances of re-election to the Presidency. The popular mind was also profoundly affected by the proved peculations of Democratic office-holders and by inquiries started in Congress as to Van Buren's life in the White House. Speeches were made in the House, in which his mode of living was graphically contrasted with the simpler manner of his predecessors. Golden goblets and spoons, costly china and fine linen, carriages and servants, it was charged by the Whig speakers, were the President's portion, while the masses toiled and suffered to pay for them. These



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speeches, profusely circulated as campaign documents, produced a telling effect upon the people.

Thus, while Van Buren's hold upon the machinery of his party was strong enough to secure him a renomination in 1840, it was predicted by shrewd observers that whoever secured the Whig nomination would also carry the election. The sentiment of the Whig party was decidedly in favor of the nomination of Clay, but half a dozen influential Whigs in New York and Pennsylvania, with Thurlow Weed at their head, were secretly opposed to it, and by adroit sleight-of-hand compassed Clay's defeat in the Whig convention held at Harrisburg.

A singular combination of circumstances made this possible. The men who had Clay's canvass in hand were not sharp enough to prevent trickery, while General Scott was popular enough in New York to secure the complimentary votes of the delegates which by right should have gone to Clay; and the anti-Masonic feeling, which for some years had been a factor in politics, was shrewdly utilized in Pennsylvania, when nothing else could have been, to disguise the opposition of a few politicians to Clay. And so Clay was put aside and the nomination given



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to Harrison, who, four years before, had met with overwhelming defeat. Clay's rage at the outcome was unbounded. "My friends," said he when informed of his defeat, "are not worth the powder and shot it would take to kill them. I am the most unfortunate man in the history of parties,—always run by my friends when sure to be defeated, and now betrayed when I or any one else would be sure of an election."

Though the nomination of Harrison was as gall and wormwood to Clay and his friends, it proved instantly popular with the people, and the campaign which followed it was the most picturesque and dramatic the country had ever seen. No such excitement was ever shown in any canvass before or since. The Whig candidate was especially popular with the young men. Many of these still live, and the fire of their youthful ardor seems to kindle again as they tell of the mighty throngs that followed the stump-speakers into the fields, sang the campaign songs, danced with glee around the representations of log cabins, and quaffed hard cider. The enthusiasm of the Whigs was unbounded and made the country a scene of political festival for the greater part of six months. Nor, though



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the Democrats sought to divide it, was this enthusiasm misplaced. Van Buren received only sixty electoral votes to two hundred and thirty-four cast for Harrison. The abolition party at this election showed its front for the first time, James G. Birney, its candidate for the Presidency, receiving seven thousand and sixty-nine popular votes,—a cloud no larger than a hand, but pregnant with coming storm.



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## CHAPTER XIV

### THE WHIGS' BARREN TRIUMPH

A GREAT multitude witnessed the inauguration of Harrison on March 4, 1841. The enthusiasm of the campaign which had elected him had not subsided, and gave life and color to the incoming of the first Whig President. Log cabins were brought to the capital for the occasion, and many campaign clubs came with regalia and banners. The Whigs of Baltimore had provided a magnificent carriage especially for the President-elect's ride to the Capitol; but he declined to use it, and rode a spirited white horse instead. Major Hurst, who had been his aide at the battle of the Thames, rode at his right and slightly in his rear, while Colonel Todd, another aide at the same battle, occupied a like position at his left.

John Quincy Adams describes the procession which followed as a mixed military and civil cavalcade, with platoons of militia companies, Tippecanoe clubs, students of colleges, schoolboys, and a handful of veterans who had fought



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under Harrison in the second war with England. It was a raw March day, with a chill wind blowing, and Harrison stood for an hour exposed to this while delivering his inaugural address from the east portico of the Capitol. He again mounted his horse at its close, and the procession, forming anew, marched to the White House, loudly cheered as it passed by the waiting crowd. The President on entering the White House took his station in the reception-room. The masses entered the front portal, passed through the vestibule into the reception-room, shook hands with the new chief magistrate, then passed down the rear steps and out through the garden. There were three inauguration balls at night, the prices of admission to them suiting different pockets. At one, where the tickets were ten dollars for gentlemen, women being invited guests, there was a representation from almost every State in the Union. Harrison, despite the fatigues of the day, attended all three balls, but danced only at the official one.

The new President, a plain, unassuming man of sixty-eight, was a native of Virginia, and the son of one of the signers of the Declaration



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of Independence. Appointed an ensign in the army by Washington, he served with gallantry in Wayne's campaign against the Indians, retiring in 1797, with the rank of captain, to become secretary of the Northwest Territory. He was made a delegate in Congress a year later, but soon afterwards was appointed governor of the newly constituted Territory of Indiana, which place he filled for many years. He commanded at Tippecanoe, and in the Indian war with Tecumseh in 1812, as chief of the Northwestern army, fought and won the battle of the Thames. He served subsequently as a Representative and Senator in Congress and as minister to Colombia, being removed by Jackson from the post last named because he defended Clay against charges of bargain and corruption. He then retired to his farm at North Bend, and during the next twelve years held no public office save that of clerk of a local court in Ohio.

Such was Harrison's career up to the time he became a successful candidate for the Presidency. Though its military passages explain a part of the enthusiasm which attended his canvass, he entered office to face difficulties of



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a most serious and embarrassing nature. Clay remained the real head of the Whig party, and he was not slow in impressing the importance of this fact upon the new President. It was Harrison's wish to make John Sargent Secretary of State, John Davis Secretary of the Treasury, and Thomas Butler King, of Georgia, Secretary of the Navy; but he was overruled by Clay, and the Cabinet as finally constructed was made up chiefly from Clay's stanchest friends, —John J. Crittenden, his colleague in the Senate, being named Attorney-General; Thomas Ewing, Secretary of the Treasury; John Bell, Secretary of War; and George E. Badger, Secretary of the Navy. The post of Secretary of State, declined by Clay, was, at his suggestion, given to Webster, while the latter's friend, Francis Granger, who had been the Whig candidate for Vice-President in 1836, was appointed Postmaster-General. All the members of the new Cabinet, an exceptionally strong one, were well known in public life save Badger, who came for the first time into national knowledge from North Carolina, where he had been judge of the Superior Court.

The new Administration was no sooner in-



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stalled than the pressure for office began. Washington was overrun with place-hunters, and every one supposed to have influence was deluged with applications. Harrison, as a rule, acquiesced without remonstrance in the suggestions as to appointments made by the members of his Cabinet. On one occasion, however, he asserted the authority of his office with a promptness and energy that astonished his advisers. Colonel John Chambers, of Kentucky, a former comrade in arms of the President, had accompanied the latter to Washington, with the understanding that any suitable request for office would be granted him. Chambers, without delay, asked for the office of governor of Iowa Territory, and the place was assured him. Webster, meanwhile, had pledged the office to a New Hampshire friend, and at a Cabinet meeting informed the President of this fact, adding that his promise had been confirmed by his associates. "Ah! that is the decision, is it?" asked Harrison. The several gentlemen of the Cabinet nodded their heads. The President without further remark wrote a few words upon a slip of paper and handed it to Webster, requesting him to read it aloud. The Secretary



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of State flushed deeply, and then read in an audible voice, "William Henry Harrison, President of the United States." There was a second's silence, quickly broken by the President, who said, "And William Henry Harrison tells you, gentlemen, that, by God, John Chambers shall be governor of Iowa." Chambers, before the day was ended, received his commission.

Webster was not the only Whig leader to meet with rebuke from the President in the urgent quest for place. Clay's peremptoriness in certain matters prior to the inauguration had wrung from Harrison the remark, "You forget, Mr. Clay, that I am the President;" and when after Harrison took office Clay insisted in an arbitrary way upon some removals, in order that friends of his might be appointed to the places thus vacated, the President, in a politely worded note, informed Clay that in the future he had best communicate in writing the suggestions that he desired to offer, instead of calling personally at the White House. A friend, waiting upon Clay, found him angrily pacing the room with the President's message crumpled in his hand. "And it has come to this!" he said. "I am civilly but virtually requested not



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to visit the White House,—not to see the President personally, but hereafter only communicate with him in writing. Here is my table loaded with letters from my friends in every part of the Union asking for office, when I have not one to give, nor influence enough to secure the appointment of a friend to the most humble position."

Clay's strained relations with Harrison no doubt would have ended in complete estrangement had the President lived, but in a day or two the Whig chieftain left for home, and when he came again to Washington the Presidency had passed into other hands. Harrison, at the time of his election, was far advanced in years and in feeble health. His strength soon failed him under the heavy and unfamiliar burdens placed upon it, and late in March, 1841, he took to his bed, never to leave it. Pneumonia, following a heavy cold, had seized him, and the progress of the disease was so rapid that his wife, who had remained at North Bend on account of illness, was unable to reach his deathbed. Towards the end his mind wandered. "My dear madam," he would say, "I did not direct that your husband should be turned



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out. I did not know it. I tried to prevent it." And again he would exclaim in broken sentences, "It is wrong—I won't consent—it is unjust. These applications,—will they never cease?" When he spoke for the last time, it was as if he fancied himself addressing his successor, or some associate in the Administration. "Sir!" he muttered, "I wish you to understand the true principles of the government. I wish them carried out. I ask nothing more."

On Sunday morning, April 4, Harrison ceased to live. His sudden passing was a profound shock to the country, the more so that a chief magistrate had never before died in office. The funeral services were held in the East Room of the White House. Around the coffin, which rested on a temporary catafalque in the centre of the apartment, stood in a circle the new President, ex-President Adams, Secretary Webster, and the other members of the Cabinet. The second circle contained the diplomatic corps, members of both houses of Congress, and the relatives of the dead President. Beyond this circle a numerous and distinguished assemblage filled the room. At the appointed hour the burial service of the Episcopal Church was read



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by the officiating clergyman, and then the body, attended by an imposing cavalcade, was borne to the grave. It was first interred in the Congressional Cemetery, but a few years later, at the request of the Harrison family, it was removed to North Bend, where it now rests in a tomb overlooking the Ohio River.

Harrison's death had for his party a bitter and unexpected sequel. Thurlow Weed, before the meeting of the Whig convention, in 1839, urged Webster to take the post of Vice-President on the ticket with Harrison, but the suggestion was rejected with scorn. An acceptance of Weed's advice would have made Webster President in little more than a year. Clay's friends, after Harrison had been nominated, were urged to name the candidate for Vice-President. They first offered the nomination to Watkins Leigh, of Virginia, who soon would have stood in Harrison's place had he not declined it. The nomination was then offered to Nathaniel P. Tallmadge, of New York. Had he not put it aside, New York would have furnished three Presidents from the Vice-President's chair instead of two. Next Samuel Southard, of New Jersey, had the offer of the



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nomination. He, too, declined. Henry A. Wise at last put forward the claims of John Tyler. The latter's pro-slavery principles seemed to promise needed strength to the ticket, and he was accordingly nominated for Vice-President. And so, through a singular chain of circumstances, ending with the death of Harrison, John Tyler became President of the United States.

The new chief magistrate was of an old and distinguished Virginian family and had been long in public life. He had served five years in the House, had been governor of his State for a single term, and from 1827 to 1836 had held a seat in the Senate. He had opposed in both branches of Congress internal improvements, a protective tariff, and the chartering of a national bank. He had disapproved, however, the removal of the deposits by Jackson, had voted for Clay's resolution of censure, and had finally resigned his seat because of his refusal to obey the instructions of the Virginia Legislature to vote for Benton's expunging resolution. These salient facts in his career, along with his rigid advocacy of States'-rights and strict construction, proved that his only pretension to be



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a Whig lay in his having acted with the Whigs in the Senate in opposition to Jackson.

Tyler's sudden accession was, thus, accepted by the Whig leaders as a serious menace to the fulfilment of their programme, prominent in which were the chartering of a national bank and the adoption of an extensive system of internal improvements. The actions of the new President, however, gave at the outset no specific grounds for alarm. Hastening from his home in Virginia, and reaching Washington in time to attend the funeral of Harrison, he promptly announced his cordial retention of his predecessor's Cabinet, and a few days after he took the oath of office issued an address to the people in which he referred to the late Administration in terms severe enough to warrant the belief that he was prepared to go as far as any one in reversing the Democratic policy. Clay, however, was not wholly reassured by the promising sound of this address. "I repair to my post in the Senate," he wrote to a friend, "with strong hopes, not, however, unmixed with fears. If the Executive will cordially co-operate in carrying out the Whig measures, all will be well. Otherwise, everything is at hazard."



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It was to be otherwise. Congress, pursuant to a call issued by Harrison before his death, convened in extra session on May 31, the House organizing by the election of John White, of Kentucky, as Speaker. The Whigs counted a safe majority in both branches, and Clay lost no time in presenting his programme for legislative action. An act repealing Van Buren's subtreasury system was passed without delay by the House and Senate and signed by the President. Another great Whig measure—a bill for the distribution of the proceeds of the sales of the public lands among the States—was promptly enacted and as promptly received the approval of the President. After that a bankrupt act was passed by Congress and signed by Tyler.

But here Clay's hoped-for co-operation between Congress and the Executive came to an end. A bill incorporating a national bank, framed by Clay, was passed by the Senate on July 28, and by the House, without amendment, on August 6. It then went to the President, who ten days later returned it with his veto. An attempt to pass the bill over the veto failed of the required two-thirds majority. Great was



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the chagrin of the Whig leaders at this unexpected check to their plans, but, after the first shock of surprise had passed, they resolved upon another effort to effect their purpose. A second bill, framed upon lines somewhat different from the first, was duly passed by the House and Senate and, on September 4, sent to the President. The latter, at the end of five days, returned it with a second veto message.

The rage and discomfiture of the Whigs was now complete. War without quarter was instantly declared upon Tyler, and, on September 11, the members of his Cabinet, with a single exception, tendered their resignations. Webster, however, shrewdly refusing to join in a manœuvre of which the whole profit would be reaped by Clay, remained at his post, while the vacancies created by the retirement of his former associates were at once filled by the appointment of Walter Forward, of Pennsylvania, whom Harrison had made comptroller, as Secretary of the Treasury; of John McLean, of Ohio, as Secretary of War; of Abel P. Upshur, of Virginia, as Secretary of the Navy; of Hugh S. Legare, of South Carolina, as Attorney-General; and of Charles A. Wickliffe, of



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Kentucky, as Postmaster-General. These appointments were duly confirmed, as was also that of John C. Spencer, of New York, who, Justice McLean having declined the portfolio of War, was named in the latter's stead. The members of the new Cabinet were all men of superior quality, though Secretary Upshur had up to that time been little known outside of his own State.

The leading Whig members of Congress, meanwhile, had issued an address to the people in which they loudly condemned the conduct of the President, and when Congress convened in regular session in December renewed the fight upon him. This time it was not a national bank, which, to quote Webster's terse phrase, had now become "an obsolete idea," but the tariff which formed the subject of contention. Diminished importations, due to the great prostration of business, had reduced the revenue until it was insufficient to meet the expenses of the government. The Whigs accordingly carried through Congress a bill continuing the protective duties of 1833, and providing that the surplus revenue sure to accumulate should be distributed among the States.



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The compromise of 1833, in which Tyler had played an important part, provided, however, that the protective policy should come to an end in 1842. Both on this account, and because of its provisions for distributing the surplus, the President vetoed the bill. Congress then framed and passed another bill, providing for a tariff for revenue, with incidental protection, but still contemplating a distribution of the surplus, if there should be any. This bill was also vetoed by the President. Congress received the veto message with great indignation, and the House committee to which it was referred submitted a report which condemned it as an unwarranted assumption of power. The House's action voiced the cry of the vanquished: events quickly proved that Tyler was already victor in his bitter contest with the party that had placed him in office. The Whigs, unwilling to go before the country in the fall elections with the tariff question unsettled, re-enacted the vetoed bill shorn of the distributing clause, and it was at once signed by the President, whose "pocket veto" effectively and finally disposed of the distribution scheme when it was subsequently passed



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as a separate bill. Congress adjourned on the last day of August, 1842, and in the ensuing elections the Whig majority of twenty-five in the House gave place to a Democratic majority of sixty-one.

Some of the men who played leading parts in the events just chronicled were new-comers in Congress or had lately returned to it after long absence. Levi Woodbury was again a member of the Senate from New Hampshire, and Rufus Choate had taken the seat left vacant by Webster. William L. Dayton, soon to become one of the leaders of the free-soil element in the Whig party, was a Senator from New Jersey, and Virginia was represented by William S. Archer. South Carolina had replaced William C. Preston with George McDuffie, while the seat of Felix Grundy, of Tennessee, was now filled by Alfred B. Nicholson. Other new Senators were James T. Morehead, of Kentucky, whose nervous eloquence often reminded his hearers of his friend and chieftain, Clay; William Woodbridge, of Michigan, a man of clear vision and marked tenacity of purpose; and James F. Simmons, of Rhode Island, who had been a farmer and banker be-



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fore he entered the Senate, and who combined solid judgment with an unrivalled knowledge of the industrial condition and resources of the country.

Charles Jared Ingersoll, caustic and self-confident as of old, was again a member of the House from Pennsylvania, and conspicuous among the new-comers in that body were Robert C. Winthrop, of Massachusetts, afterwards Speaker and Senator and a fine example of the scholar in politics; John Young and Fernando Wood, of New York; Richard W. Thompson and David Wallace, of Indiana, both Whig orators of repute; Colonel Henry Dodge, of Wisconsin, the hero of the Black Hawk War, and his son, Augustus, of Iowa, both a little later promoted by their States to seats in the Senate; Alexander H. H. Stuart, of Virginia, subsequently Secretary of the Interior in Fillmore's Cabinet; and David L. Yulee, of Florida, soon to win and hold to the end a prominent place among the champions of slavery and secession.

Thomas F. Marshall, of Kentucky, nephew of the chief justice, was also a member of the Thirty-seventh Congress. This unusual man, who afterwards became, through drink, a men-



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tal and physical wreck, was at that time in his prime,—an entertaining and original speaker and a master of satire and invective. No new member ever came more quickly into prominence on the floor of the House,—a fact due in a measure to his unsuccessful effort to secure the passage of a resolution of censure against John Quincy Adams. The latter offering, on a January morning in 1842, his customary daily budget of petitions, presented one from Haverhill, Massachusetts, praying for a dissolution of the Union, which he moved to refer to a select committee with instructions to report adversely to the prayer of the petition. This raised a tempest in the House, and called from Marshall a series of resolutions deploring the obnoxious petition and censuring Adams for having presented it. There followed an excited and acrimonious debate which lasted several days. The principal figure in the singular scene, we are told by one who witnessed it, "was the venerable object of the censure, then nearly fourscore years of age, his limbs trembling with palsy, his bald head crimson with excitement, and tears dropping from his eyes, as he for four days stood defying the storm



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and hurling back defiantly the opprobrium with which his adversaries sought to stigmatize him."

Marshall and Henry A. Wise led in the attack upon Adams, but he was more than equal to their assaults. "Four or five years ago," said he in his closing address, "there came to this House a man with his hands and face dripping with the blood of murder, the blotches of which are yet hanging upon him, and when it was proposed that he should be tried by the House for that crime, I opposed it." After this dramatic allusion to the killing of Cilley, Adams proceeded to castigate Wise without mercy. Then turning his attention to Marshall, he alluded in cutting fashion to the friendly relations that had existed between the gentleman's uncle, the chief justice, and his own father, John Adams. The slave-power, he said, was now his judge, and slave-holders were to sit as jurors. They proposed to treat him with mercy. He disdained and rejected their mercy, and he defied them. Let them expel him if they dared,—he had constituents to go to, and they would soon return him to his seat.

When Adams had finished, Representatives



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from the free States crowded around him to offer their congratulations, and a resolution offered by Millard Fillmore to lay the whole subject on the table was passed by an overwhelming vote. Marshall, later in the same session, was urged by some of the Southern members to renew the fight, but refused to do so. "I have been gored once by the old bull," said he, "and have had enough of him. If there is to be any more of this kind of work, it must be undertaken by somebody else. The old man is a match for a score of such fellows as you and I."

A few weeks after Adams's signal triumph over his enemies, a scene more pacific but not less interesting was enacted at the other end of the Capitol. Clay, when he found it impossible to save the measures of the Whig party from the opposition of Tyler, resigned his seat in the Senate in order to promote his canvass for the Presidency in 1844, and Kentucky sent John J. Crittenden to succeed him. It was known that in presenting his successor's credentials, on March 31, 1842, Clay would deliver a farewell address, and accordingly the Senate chamber and galleries were, at an early hour, filled



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to their limits. Clay arose at one o'clock, and, after a moment's silence, said he was about to present the last motion he should ever make to the Senate. He first wished, however, to make a few observations suggested to his mind by the occasion. Then, in a voice that bespoke deep emotion, he referred to the long period that he had been in public life, and made modest allusion to his services. Such as they were, it was not for him to speak of them. He left them to be judged by those who should come after him. But of his private motives he had a right to speak. Whatever he had done had been done with a single eye and a single heart to the good of his country.

Clay next alluded with feeling and dignity to the misrepresentation and calumny of which he had long been the victim, but which he had borne with unshaken confidence that his fellow-citizens would eventually do him justice. Still, if he had malignant enemies, he had also warm and devoted friends in every part of the land, and in tones of exquisite tenderness he proceeded to pay loving tribute to his adopted State. He told how, five-and-forty years before, he had emigrated to Kentucky a poor and



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friendless orphan; of how she had at once embraced and caressed him like a native child; and of how from that day to this her choicest honors had been showered upon him. "It is to me an unspeakable pleasure," said he, "that I shall finally deposit—and it will not be long before that time arrives—my last remains under her generous soil with those of her gallant and patriotic sons who have preceded me."

There followed a moving plea for the forgiveness of those whose feelings he had injured in the heat of debate, during which the members sat with bowed heads, their eyes suffused with tears. "May the blessing of heaven rest upon the whole Senate and each member of it," said the speaker in reverent conclusion, "and may the labors of every one redound to the benefit of the nation and the advancement of his own fame and renown. And when you shall retire to the bosom of your constituents may you meet with that most cheering and gratifying of all human rewards,—their cordial 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' And now, Messrs. President and Senators, I bid you a long, a last, and friendly farewell."

Clay's remarks ended and his successor sworn



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in, there was a solemn silence, broken finally by Senator Preston, of South Carolina. "What has just taken place," said the latter, rising in his place, "is an epoch in legislative history, and from the feelings evidenced I plainly see that there is little disposition to attend to business; I, therefore, move that the Senate be adjourned." The motion was unanimously agreed to, and the members of the Senate, gathering about Clay, took individual leave of him. As Clay made ready to leave the chamber he encountered Calhoun. The only words that had passed between them for years had been those harshly spoken in debate. But now, as they met, the old time overcame them, and intervening differences were forgotten. Tears filled their eyes. They shook each other cordially by the hand, interchanged a fervent "God bless you," and parted.

A little more than a year later Webster followed his great compeer into private life. One reason why Webster had remained in Tyler's Cabinet after the resignation of his associates was that he might complete a pending treaty with Great Britain. When he took the portfolio of state there had existed a complication



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of difficulties with that country that seemed to be bringing us to the verge of war. Webster, in disentangling these difficulties, showed signal tact and discretion. He was also aided by a timely change of ministry in England, which replaced Palmerston with Aberdeen. Edward Everett, being then in London, Webster secured his appointment as minister to Great Britain. In response to this appointment Lord Ashburton, the son of an American mother and whose friendly feeling towards the United States was well known, was sent over on a special mission to confer with Webster. The result of their negotiations was the Treaty of Washington, signed in August, 1842, and afterwards ratified by the Senate. This treaty settled a long-standing dispute about our northeastern boundary and overthrew the British claim to exercise the right of search. Its successful negotiation in the face of an unfriendly Senate and a hostile House was justly regarded by Webster as one of the greatest achievements of his life, and, indeed, gave conclusive proof of his brilliant and solid powers as a diplomatist.

There were, however, two mooted questions that the treaty did not settle: these were the



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Oregon boundary and the dispute over the fisheries on the north Atlantic coast. A striking yet little remembered incident explains this failure. Dr. Marcus Whitman, an American missionary of patriotic impulses and heroic mould, had lived for several years in the fertile valley of the Columbia. Convinced that it was the purpose of the British to deter American colonization of the valley by spreading reports of its inaccessibility, and at the same time to fill it with English emigrants, he resolved to visit Washington and lay the matter before the government. The rejoicing at the English fort at Walla Walla in the fall of 1842 over the approach of a large party of colonists, and the knowledge that the Webster-Ashburton treaty was then under consideration, impelled him to lose no time, and within twenty-four hours he set out for the East on horseback.

With Dr. Whitman were one companion and a guide. The 3d day of January, 1843, the snow, perils, and hardships of the mountains behind them, they reached Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River. Whitman's hands and face were frozen, but an open trail now lay before him to the East, and three months later to a



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day he dropped among the politicians of Washington like a bolt from the blue. A downright frontiersman, in his dress of skins, he won the heart of Tyler; and his arguments as to the value and accessibility of the valley of the Columbia silenced the objections of Webster, who was planning to surrender Oregon in exchange for the right to use the British cod-fisheries. Instead, it was retained, while the settlement of the fisheries question was left to a succeeding generation. Whitman's well-timed visit to the capital had saved to the Union the Washington, Oregon, and Idaho of to-day, a territory larger than the New England and Middle States, which stand a monument to his sagacity.

Webster's continuance in Tyler's Cabinet had angered and alienated many of his Whig associates, but his patriotism dwarfed personal considerations, and he refused to leave his post until he knew the Treaty of Washington to be quite safe. That assured, in May, 1843, he resigned his Secretaryship and retired to Boston. He continued, however, to pass his winters in Washington, being frequently heard in argument before the Supreme Court. The most



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important case in which he appeared as chief counsel at this period was the action brought by the heirs of Stephen Girard to recover his bequest for the establishment and maintenance of a college. Webster took the broad ground that the plan of education at the Girard College was derogatory to the Christian religion, contrary to sound morals, and subversive of law. He spoke for three days with eloquence and power, the court-room the whole time being densely crowded, but he could not answer the arguments of Horace Binney and John Sargent, the ablest lawyers of Philadelphia, who defended the bequest and gained the suit.



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## CHAPTER XV

### A PRESIDENT WITHOUT A PARTY

SCOUTED by the Whigs, and supported by the Democrats only when his purposes ran parallel to their own, Tyler, during the greater part of his term, found himself, save for a small personal following in Congress, a President without a party. It was a curious spectacle, and one that only once has been repeated. Social life at Washington, however, was very agreeable during this period, political differences rarely finding their way into the drawing-rooms. The ceremonious etiquette restored by Van Buren vanished from the White House, and the President, whose manners were those of the ancient Virginia school, lived as he had on his plantation, attended by his family slaves. Healy, the artist, when invited to reside at the White House while copying Stuart's portrait of Washington for Louis Phillipe of France, was forcibly struck, so he tells us, with the absence of all ceremony. The first day of his sojourn he accompanied the family to the



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drawing-room after dinner, and then said, with a profound bow, "Mr. President, with your permission I will retire to my work."

"My good fellow," replied Tyler, "do just what you please."

Letitia Christian Tyler, wife of the President, died in September, 1842. She was succeeded as mistress of the White House by Mrs. Robert Tyler, wife of the President's eldest son. The younger Mrs. Tyler was the daughter of Thomas Apthorpe Cooper, a popular tragedian of the period. An accomplished and charming woman, her published letters show that she could be alike witty and thoughtful to some purpose. Her tactful reign as first lady lasted a little less than two years, for in June, 1844, Miss Julia Gardiner, of New York, became the President's second wife. The latter's tenure of the White House was for eight months only, but during that time she won the cordial good-will of every one. Those who hated Tyler and despised all his works had nothing but words of praise for her.

Other members of the Tyler family circle were the President's son and private secretary, John Tyler, Jr., and his daughter, Mrs. Letitia



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Tyler Semple. The younger Tyler was a man of magnificent presence, and for many years a distinguished figure in the social circles of the capital. It was his lot, however, to survive most of the friends of his youth and to pass his closing years in poverty and obscurity. He died a decade ago in Georgetown. Mrs. Semple had been but a few months wedded to a paymaster in the navy when her father became President, and her youthful beauty and winsome bearing added not a little to the social success of his Administration.

When Webster became Secretary of State he installed himself in the Swann house, facing the northwest corner of Lafayette Square, and lived there in generous style during the negotiation of the Treaty of Washington. Another centre of gracious hospitality was the home of General Scott, who upon becoming commanding general of the army, in 1841, established his head-quarters in Washington. The general had married, when a subaltern, Miss Maria Mayo, of Richmond, at that time a reigning belle of the Old Dominion, and who possessed, like her husband, a commanding presence and great conversational powers. The army had at this time



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another picturesque representative at the capital in General Edmund P. Gaines, familiarly known as "the hero of Fort Erie." Tall, spare, and erect, with snow-white hair and sloe-black eyes, General Gaines presented a striking contrast to his small, vivacious wife, Myra Clark, who had lately begun the long legal contest which was to make her the most widely known litigant of her time.

Mrs. Gaines was the daughter of Daniel Clark, a shrewd, energetic Irishman, who, settling in New Orleans early in the last century, became in a few years one of the master-merchants of that city. He was secretly married in 1803 to Zulime des Granges, a Creole of remarkable beauty, who, it was alleged, had not then been divorced from her first husband. Myra Clark was born of this connection, and when, in 1813, the father was seized with a fatal sickness, he made a will in her favor, in which he acknowledged her as his legitimate daughter. This will could not be found after Clark's death, but a previous one was produced which contained no recognition of Myra. Under this instrument Clark's real estate in New Orleans was administered on and sold. Nor did his



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daughter Myra, then a child, know anything of her parentage and history until she had grown to womanhood and become the wife of William W. Whitney, of New York. Then she at once began the prosecution of her claim to be recognized as the legitimate daughter and heiress of Clark, and to recover the property which had been left by her father and bought by the city of New Orleans. When, after the death of her first husband, General Gaines addressed her, she consented to become his wife only upon his promise to aid her litigation.

Mrs. Gaines survived her second husband also, and many residents of Washington remember her as a little, thin old woman, whose cheerfulness, vivacity, and energy remained to the last. General Gaines at his death left her wealthy, but years of litigation ate up her money, and at times she was too poor to pay the court costs; but still she persevered in her determination to clear the stain from her mother's name and to secure what she regarded as her right. Deserted by one counsel after another, she struggled on, hopeful, buoyant, and confident of victory, until at last, in 1881, when



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she was seventy-five years old, she received, in the United States Circuit Court, a judgment against the city of New Orleans for the better part of two million dollars. Four years later she died while the case was on appeal to the United States Supreme Court.

Another delightful centre of Washington hospitality in the early forties was the house of Thomas H. Benton, whose four charming daughters had been carefully educated under his own supervision. The house was bought by Colonel Benton from a Boston gentleman, who, having lived much in London, had built it with thick walls and spacious rooms and beautified the grounds in the rear, where grass and trees were framed in high thick growths of ivy and scarlet trumpet-creeper which covered the garden walls and stables. There the Benton family had the luxury of home evenings, and many men who were to become famous found the way to their drawing-room. The master had a cordial and kindly welcome for all, but he was not willing that his handsomest daughter, Miss Jessie, should receive the attentions of a lieutenant of engineers, John C. Fremont by name, and of a sudden, through the influence



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of Benton, the young officer received from the War Department an order to make an examination of the river Des Moines on the Western frontier. The survey was made quickly, and soon after Fremont's return from this duty there was an elopement and a secret marriage. Benton, though angry at first, soon forgave, and his support in Congress speedily enabled Fremont to explore, under the patronage of the general government, the vast region beyond the Rocky Mountains and to win for himself the name of the "Pathfinder."

A very different wedding from Jessie Benton's was that of Baron de Bodisco, the Russian minister, and Harriet Williams. The bride was sixteen, the groom past sixty. She was a beautiful girl, the daughter of a clerk in one of the departments, and wholly unknown to the Washington world. But that she was to become the wife of Bodisco, the splendid, as he was called, was enough, and he willed it that she was not to be seen until the morning of the marriage. Everything connected with the wedding was of his planning. The bride being very young, he determined that the bridesmaids should be very young also, while, as the bride-



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groom was old,—"a short stout man, with a broad Calmuck face, much wrinkled and furred across by shaggy whiskers,"—the groomsmen must be suited to his dignity and age.

The best man was Henry Fox, the British minister, "a withered, cynical, silent man," whom Byron had once described as "so changed that his oldest creditor would not know him," and who, with the thirteen-year old sister of the bride, stood next to the groom. Next the bride were James Buchanan and Jessie Benton. Another of the groomsmen was the Chevalier de Martini, minister from the Hague, "not young, large, placid, easy friends with every one, and in a softly amused state of smiles," with the eldest of the bridesmaids, a girl of sixteen, the daughter of Commodore Morris. The marriage was counted a risky one, but in his will Bodisco expressed the hope that his widow would marry again and be as happy as she had made him.

Following this union of April and December, the Russian legation, then located at Georgetown, became the scene of brilliant weekly entertainments, given, it was said, by the direction of the Emperor Nicholas, who had a special



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allowance made for table-money. There was dancing at these entertainments, an excellent supper, and a room devoted to whist, at which the baron, though a reckless and unskilled player, used, as the host of the evening, to take a hand. One night, when he had thus sat down to play with those more familiar with the game, he lost several hundred dollars, and a little later, at the supper-table made the unique announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "it is my disagreeable duty to tell you that these receptions must have an end, and to declare them at an end for the present, cause why? The fund for their expend, ladies and gentlemen, is exhaust, and they must discontinue." Which they did, much to the disgust of General Scott, who had been the baron's partner, and was a considerable loser in consequence.

Public opinion was not, in those days, so averse to gaming in Washington as in most of the Northern cities, and gambling-houses were plentiful on Pennsylvania Avenue. Many of these establishments had club-rooms attached, where members of Congress and others amused themselves with brag, vingt-et-un, and whist.



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Railways were in their infancy, and few members of Congress could afford to have their families with them during the sessions. Thence arose a feature of capital life which ended only with the Civil War. This was the custom followed by Senators and Representatives of forming what were termed "messes" at private boarding-houses, into which no other guests were admitted without their consent. These clubs or messes were made up of members of like political opinions, in order that confidential matters might always be discussed. There was a common parlor for the gentlemen of the mess, but rarely did any member enjoy the luxury of a private parlor, even though he had his wife with him. Many of the mess-tables, however, were supplied with the choicest cheer and the rarest wines, and occasionally a dinner or a dancing party would be given, that the hospitalities received from residents might be reciprocated.

As Democrats and Whigs preferred to mess separately, so Northern and Southern men usually elected to associate with others from their own section. Dawson's on North A Street, Capitol Hill, was for many years famous for



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The best-known gamester for many years was Edward Pendleton, a member of the distinguished Virginia family of that name. It was this courtly gambler's daily wont to spread in his superb dining-room, with its mahogany of antique pattern and solid silver service, a dinner of rare viands and rarer wines; and around his table, at which he presided in full dress, were often gathered some of the most distinguished men in the nation. Scores of Senators and Representatives, particularly from the South and West, squandered their salaries at the gaming-table, and some impaired their private fortunes by the same indulgence. Contractors and Indian traders were also bold and frequently desperate players. Indeed, though "Congress had enacted stringent penal laws to prevent gambling, they were a dead letter, unless some poor devil made a complaint of foul play, or some fleeced blackleg sought vengeance through the aid of the grand jury; and then the matter was usually compounded by the paying of money."

Yet much of the recklessness which then prevailed in Washington was mainly due to the conditions which have since become obsolete.



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its Southern messes, and there congregated those congenial spirits, John Randolph, Nathaniel Macon, William R. King, Willie P. Mangum, and others not now remembered. The head-quarters of the South was subsequently transferred to the house known since 1861 as the "Old Capitol Prison," which was long the abiding-place of John C. Calhoun and many another Southerner of influence and renown. The Congressional "mess" passed away with the stage-coach,—the increase of railways making possible the now general custom of wives and daughters accompanying husbands and fathers to the capital and spending the session with them; but while it lasted its unsocial, bachelor life was, as before stated, the cause of much of the profligacy that formerly prevailed in Washington.

Charles Dickens, a flashily dressed, shock-headed youth, with a hint of the cockney about him, in the spring of 1842 paid a widely heralded visit to Washington, which during the same season welcomed Lord Morpeth, afterwards Earl of Carlisle, and the Prince de Joinville, younger son of Louis Phillipe, King of the French. The prince, being the first repre-



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sentative of royalty who had ever been a guest of the federal city, became at once a great lion. Tradition paints him a remarkably handsome man, of fine physique, and the personification of manly grace. He always wore the uniform of the regiment of which he was honorary colonel, and as he drove through the city in the barouche of the period or essayed short rambles in its thoroughfares, he became an object of much interest. The prince, two decades later, made a second visit to Washington, accompanied by his young nephews, the Comte de Paris and the Duc de Chartres, in order to take part in the Civil War and serve as honorary aids on the staff of General McClellan. The twenty years which had passed since his first visit had thinned his flowing locks, while thirteen years of exile had seamed his face, but his Parisian vivacity and geniality remained, and again served to make him a prime favorite in the social circles of the capital.

Another temporary sojourner in Washington during Tyler's time was John Howard Payne. The author of "Home Sweet Home" appeared at the capital in the fall of 1841, seeking an appointment in the diplomatic or consular ser-



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vice. A delightful companion, he made instant friends of his fellow-knights of the pen, but encountered an unexpected obstacle in Secretary Webster, who, having conceived a violent prejudice against the poet, refused to do anything for him. Finally, however, Webster was called to Boston on business, leaving his son Fletcher acting Secretary of State. Payne's friends, during Webster's absence, managed to have him appointed consul at Tunis, and he was on his way to his post before the Secretary returned to Washington. Payne remained at the ancient African city during the Administrations of Tyler, Polk, and Taylor, and there he died in April, 1852. Thirty years afterwards William W. Corcoran, who personally knew him, secured permission to remove his body, and in June, 1883, it was brought back to his native country. A handsome monument now marks its last resting-place in Oak Hill Cemetery.

One of those who was most active in securing Payne's appointment to the Tunis consulship was Francis Bacon, then the Washington correspondent of the New York *American,* for which he wrote over the initials R. M. T. H.,



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—Regular Member of the Third House. Bacon wielded a virile pen, and when he chose to do so, could condense a column of denunciation, satire, and sarcasm into a single paragraph. His style in some respects was very like that of Amos Kendall, who in 1840 had retired from Van Buren's Cabinet to establish a political periodical called *Kendall's Expositor.* A year later Kendall founded the *Union Democrat,* a weekly in which the Whig party and all of its members were vigorously assailed, but both of these journals were soon discontinued in order that their owner might devote all of his time to the promotion and development of the telegraph, in which he had become associated with the inventor, Samuel F. B. Morse.

The story of Morse's long fight for the recognition and adoption of his system makes romance of the best sort. It was in September, 1837, that he first made a formal request to Congress for aid to build a telegraph line. Failure and ridicule were his reward, yet, penniless and almost friendless, he persisted in bringing the matter before Congress after Congress, until, at last, a bill granting him thirty thousand dollars was favorably reported from



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the committee and passed by the House in February, 1842. The bill then went to the Senate. There action upon it was delayed, and late on the last night of the session Morse left the Capitol with little hopes of its passage. He returned to his hotel, counted his money, and found that after paying his expenses to New York he would have less than a dollar left. Then he went to bed, sad but not entirely hopeless, for, notwithstanding all his trials and disappointments, confidence in his ultimate success never deserted him. The next morning, as he was going to breakfast, a messenger met him with the news that his bill had been rushed through the Senate without division on the night of March 3, 1842.

The construction of the experimental line from Baltimore to Washington, a distance of forty miles, was quickly accomplished, and by the end of May, 1842, communication between the two cities was completed and practically perfect. The first public message sent over the line was transmitted, on May 24, by Annie G. Ellsworth, daughter of Henry L. Ellsworth, the Commissioner of Patents and Morse's friend when he most needed friends. She selected the



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words, "What hath God wrought!" and the strip of paper on which the telegraphic characters of the message were printed is now preserved in the archives of the Hartford Athenæum. The success of the telegraph made both Morse and Kendall rich men. The latter spent his last years in Washington and at his nearby country-seat, Kendall Green, active in works of philanthropy,—the Washington Deaf and Dumb Asylum was founded by him,—and, during the Civil War, earnest and untiring in his support of the Union.

When Webster retired from Tyler's Cabinet, in the spring of 1843, Hugh S. Legare succeeded him as Secretary of State, the latter's post as Attorney-General being afterwards filled by the appointment of John Nelson, of Maryland. James M. Porter, of Pennsylvania, was at the same time appointed to the Secretaryship of War made vacant by the transfer of John C. Spencer to the Treasury Department. Legare died suddenly in June, 1843, whereupon Abel Upshur was made Secretary of State and David Henshaw, of Massachusetts, Secretary of the Navy. The nominations of Porter and Henshaw were subsequently rejected by the



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Senate, and they were replaced by William Wilkins, of Pennsylvania, and Thomas W. Gilmer, of Virginia, while early in the following year Spencer relinquished the Treasury portfolio to George M. Bibb, of Kentucky.

These numerous changes did not mark the end of Tyler's cabinet-making. The explosion of a cannon on the war-steamer "Princeton," while returning from a pleasure excursion down the Potomac, on February 28, 1844, killed Secretaries Upshur and Gilmer, with six others, while the President and several prominent legislators and high officials, Colonel Benton among the number, had a narrow escape from death. Following this tragedy and the burial of the victims, Tyler's Cabinet was further reorganized by the appointment of John Y. Mason, of Virginia, as Secretary of the Navy, and of John C. Calhoun as Secretary of State. The latter had ceased to be a Senator in March, 1843, and was then living in retirement in South Carolina. He owed his recall to public life to Henry A. Wise, Tyler's favorite adviser. "The most important work for you to do," Wise is reported to have said to the President, "is the annexation of Texas. The man for that work is John C.



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Calhoun as Secretary of State. Send for him at once."

Tyler, somewhat against his will, sent for Calhoun, who entered gladly upon the task that had been set for him. Nine years before, Texas, peopled chiefly by emigrants from the Southern States, had won its independence from Mexico. Later it had asked for admission to Statehood. Calhoun saw in its annexation a measure full of importance to the slave interest, of which he had now become the most prominent champion, for if, by the acquisition of Oregon, the Northern States should secure ample room for expansion beyond the Rocky Mountains, then the Southern States must have Texas as a counterpoise, or else the existence of slavery would be imperilled. Tyler was of the same mind as Calhoun, and early in his Administration had begun negotiations with the Texan authorities.

These negotiations Calhoun took in hand as soon as he became Secretary of State, and he pushed them with so much energy and despatch that on April 12, 1844, a treaty was concluded with the government of Texas providing for the annexation. This treaty was rejected by



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the Senate for want of a two-thirds vote, all of the Whigs and seven of the Democrats voting against it. But it made the acquisition of Texas a pivotal question in the Presidential contest of 1844, and it gave Calhoun, as he had foreseen that it would, the opportunity to be finally and fully avenged upon his old rival, Van Buren.

The ex-President, who had devoted his years of retirement to the restoration of his shattered prestige, would have been renominated by the Democrats had not Calhoun, at the proper moment, suggested that he be adroitly questioned on the annexation question in a letter of seeming friendly inquiry written him by one Hamett, a member of the House from Mississippi. The sagacious Van Buren was quick to perceive that a pit had been dug for him, but he answered the Hamett letter with candor and dignity. He favored the annexation of Texas when it could be brought about peacefully and with honor, but opposed it at that time, when it would surely be followed by a war with Mexico.

Van Buren's manly avowal lost him many Southern supporters, and, though he counted a clear majority of delegates, when the Democratic national convention assembled in Balti-



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more, on May 27, 1844, a shrewd enforcement of the two-thirds rule deprived him of this advantage over his rivals. Prolonged balloting produced much bad feeling between the supporters of Van Buren and his chief competitor, Cass. On the eighth ballot forty-four votes were cast for James K. Polk, of Tennessee. The latter, up to that time, had received public mention only as a possible candidate for Vice-President, but on the ninth ballot, by one of those remarkable whirls of sentiment that sometimes take hold of bodies of men, backed by the cunning manipulation of Robert J. Walker and other Southern politicians, he was unanimously nominated. Polk had been Speaker of the House and governor of his State, but was then living in complete retirement. "The nomination," says Benton, "was a surprise and marvel to the country."

Meanwhile, Clay, now at the flood-tide of his popularity, had been nominated by acclamation by the Whigs, who, at the outset, counted on an easy victory. They counted amiss, for the campaign was not half over when Clay split upon the rock that had brought Van Buren to grief before it began. The Whig



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platform was silent upon the subject of the annexation of Texas. Subsequently, however, Clay wrote his so-called "Raleigh letter," in which he announced his opposition to annexation; then, alarmed by the dissatisfaction of his friends in the South, he wrote again, this time the "Alabama letter," in which he temporized with the burning question. He could not have contributed more effectively to his own undoing. His vacillating course failed to reinstate him in Southern favor, and it cost him much of his Northern support.

It is probable, however, that Clay would have been elected had there not arisen to plague him one of those bitter personal resentments which are always the price paid for long-continued leadership, and which now and then lend a curious, pathetic interest to our political annals. Clay in some way had given serious offence to James G. Birney. The exact cause of this hostility had never been revealed, nor did Clay himself, so he asserted, ever understand it. Birney, however, made no secret of it. He was an active abolitionist, and there was, as had been shown in the preceding campaign, some trifling strength in the so-called Abolition



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party in the North. Its members met in convention and nominated Birney for President, as they had done in 1840. Birney did not want to run again, but saw in his candidacy a chance to repay Clay for the slight or whatever it was which had caused the personal enmity. He, therefore, ran, and had such revenge as caused the Whig party to lose the Presidency.

Birney's popular vote of sixty-two thousand three hundred was sufficient to turn New York and Michigan from the Whigs and to give Polk a majority of sixty-five in the Electoral College. And so tall "Harry of the Slashes," the ideal American, chivalrous and tender, was beaten by one whose qualifications were, to the masses, an interrogation point. Clay was heart-broken at his unlooked-for defeat. Youth and hope were no longer his. "The blow that has fallen on our country is very heavy," he wrote to a friend. "I hope she may recover from it, but I confess that the prospect is dark and discouraging." These were the words of a disappointed man. Clay's political sun, save for a faint glimmer on the horizon in 1848, had set never to rise again.

Polk faced the Presidency pledged to secure



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the annexation of Texas at all hazards, but when he took office that measure had already become an accomplished fact. Near the close of the last session of the Thirty-eighth Congress, with which the Tyler Administration ended, a resolution for the annexation of Texas was, at the suggestion of Calhoun, introduced in both branches. It passed the House after a resolute resistance, and was discussed, amended, and adopted by the Senate. It provided in its final form for the extension of the Missouri Compromise line westward through the Texan territory to be acquired by the annexation. North of that line slavery was to be prohibited; south of it the question was to be determined by the people living on the spot. The resolution reached the President on March 3, 1845, and was immediately approved by him. The following day, Tyler's last in office, a messenger was despatched to Texas bearing that portion of it which had only to be accepted to secure annexation.

Another important act of Tyler's final days in office was the appointment of Levi Woodbury to succeed the venerable Justice Story. Before that he had made two other appointments to



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the bench of the Supreme Court,—Samuel Nelson, of New York, who, in 1843, succeeded Justice Thompson, and Robert C. Grier, of Pennsylvania, who, a year later, was given the seat left vacant by the death of Justice Baldwin. Tyler had first offered Baldwin's place to John Sargent, who had served with him in Congress and whose character and abilities he held in high regard. "I am more than sixty years of age, my health is not firm, and I have made up my mind to accept no public station," said Sargent, in declining the honor. "Offer the place to Mr. Binney, but do not inform him that it has been tendered to me or that I have declined it." Sargent's suggestion was acted on,—it is Henry A. Wise who tells the story,—and the vacant seat was offered to Binney, who declined it for the same reasons advanced by Sargent, adding, "Offer it to Mr. Sargent; he would be a conspicuously fit appointment, but do not tell him that I have declined it." Thus, unconscious of the other's action, did each of two great lawyers bear generous witness to the talents of his rival.

The last night of February, 1845, the outgoing President and his young and handsome



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wife gave a farewell ball at the White House in honor of his successor. The incoming President was prevented from attending by the illness of his wife, but the Vice-President-elect, George M. Dallas, with his crown of snow-white hair, towered above all other guests, save General Scott and "Long" John Wentworth. There was dancing in the East Room, Mrs. Tyler and Secretary Wilkins leading in the first quadrille. So ended the social reign of the Tylers. Four days later the President and his family set out for their Virginia farm, and Washington saw them no more.

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